

CONTROVERSY

CAN BERNIE
OVERTAKE
BIDEN?

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The rise of
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Demanding
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*Speaker
Nancy Pelosi*



THE WEEK

THE BEST OF THE U.S. AND INTERNATIONAL MEDIA

A successful strategy?

How Trump's killing of Soleimani
will affect the U.S.'s conflict
with Iran

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JANUARY 17, 2020 VOLUME 20 ISSUE 958

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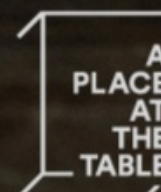
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Editor's letter

The 2020s have started with a brutal display of how climate change is making the world a more hostile place to live. Fueled by soaring temperatures and years of drought, bushfires across Australia have consumed at least 15 million acres since September—an area about the size of West Virginia (see Best columns: International). The blazes have killed at least 15 people and forced thousands more to flee their homes. Some 1 billion animals, many of them members of species found nowhere else on Earth, are thought to have been incinerated. Colossal plumes of smoke are choking Sydney and have turned the sky above New Zealand's largest city, Auckland—some 1,300 miles away—an apocalyptic orange. This disaster comes after a year in which the warning signs of climate change flashed everywhere: In Brazil, 7 million acres of Amazon rain forest went up in flames; in Japan, 18,000 people were hospitalized during an epic heat wave; across Europe, temperature records were broken and then broken again.

The scientific consensus on what we need to do to reduce the risks of long-term catastrophic climate change is clear: slash greenhouse gas emissions as fast as possible. But that's not going to happen anytime soon. No major Western economy is yet meeting the modest emission reduction targets set by the 2016 Paris Agreement, a deal the Trump administration pulled out of last year. And emissions levels in developing countries will only rise in the coming years. China's middle class has grown from 29 million people in 1999 to some 400 million today, and India is expected to add 500 million to its middle class over the next decade. Those people want the same carbon-intensive luxuries that Americans have enjoyed for years: air-conditioning, a family car, a meat-heavy diet. We can hardly demand they curb their appetites when we refuse to do the same. But so long as no one makes any meaningful sacrifices, our planet will continue to burn.

Theunis Bates
Managing editor

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Iran stands down after Soleimani killing

What happened

America and Iran appeared to back away from the brink of war this week after the U.S. killed the nation's top military leader in a drone strike and Iran responded by harmlessly firing 22 missiles at two Iraqi bases housing American troops. Following the exchange of military actions, in which no Americans were killed or wounded, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said his nation had "concluded proportionate measures" in response to the killing of Maj. Gen. Qasem Soleimani on Jan. 3. President Trump said in a televised White House speech that "the United States is ready to embrace peace," but announced new sanctions on Iran and warned its leaders against further hostilities or attempting to build a nuclear bomb. Despite the apparent de-escalation, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's Supreme Leader, said that the missile attacks were "not sufficient" revenge for Soleimani's death. Iran vowed to drive the U.S. out of Iraq, announced its withdrawal from the nuclear weapons deal it signed with six nations in 2015, and said it would resume enriching uranium without any limits.

The crisis began when a pro-Iranian militia fired about 30 rockets at a joint U.S.-Iraqi base on Dec. 27, wounding three U.S. soldiers and killing an American interpreter. Two days later, Trump ordered airstrikes on five sites controlled by the Iran-backed militia Kataib Hezbollah, killing 24 people and wounding dozens more. That led to thousands of Shiite militia supporters storming the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, where they hurled Molotov cocktails and breached the compound's reception areas before withdrawing.

After the embassy attack, Pentagon officials presented Trump with a menu of options and were "stunned" when he chose the most severe one—killing Soleimani, White House sources told *The New York Times*. Sources also told the newspaper that Trump feared the storming of the Baghdad embassy—which critics called "Trump's Benghazi"—had made him look weak. Administration officials said Soleimani was preemptively killed to prevent "imminent attacks" on Americans, but congressional Democrats who attended an intelligence briefing said the evidence of a plot was "vague" and unconvincing.

What the editorials said

Soleimani's death "is a great moment for the United States," said the *Washington Examiner*. As commander of Iran's Quds Force, he'd "done more to destabilize the Middle East than perhaps any single figure," plotting terror attacks and training Islamic militants around the region. During the Iraq War, his fiendish roadside bomb campaign killed and maimed hundreds of U.S. soldiers. Trump's "bold move" puts the mullahs on notice that they will pay an "outside price" every time they take action against U.S. interests and citizens.



Mourners at Soleimani's funeral in Kerman, Iran

from possible attacks by Shiite militias and Iran. Clearly, "Trump is winging it with Iran" without having strategically thought out the consequences.

What the columnists said

If Iran really does stand down, it will be "a major victory for President Trump," said Philip Klein in *WashingtonExaminer.com*. By all accounts, Soleimani was "irreplaceable to Iran" as the architect of its efforts to extend Iranian influence throughout the region. By boldly eliminating him, Trump also demonstrated that America will not abide additional Iranian provocations. "The cost-benefit analysis is not even close."

Actually, "the Iran crisis isn't even close to over," said Fred Kaplan in *Slate.com*. Instead of taking "steps to de-escalate the broader conflict" when Iran chose the off ramp from war, Trump promised more sanctions and issued new threats to attack Iran. "All concessions will have to come from Tehran." That won't happen, so further conflict is likely. It was Trump's "failed policy toward Iran" that created this mess, said Wendy Sherman in *USAToday.com*. By taking the U.S. out of the nuclear deal negotiated by the Obama administration, Trump empowered "Iran's most extreme hardliners," who have executed a string of provocations that include mining ships in the Persian Gulf, downing an American drone, and attacking a Saudi oil facility. Was the nuclear deal perfect? No. But

Iran was abiding by its terms, and incremental progress always trumps chaos, which is what we have now.

Nonetheless, Trump and his giddy allies are using Soleimani's death as "a tool to batter his Democratic rivals," said Nancy Cook in *Politico.com*. Right after the drone strike, Democrats were united in accusing Trump of "acting rashly." But in a "theme echoed across conservative circles and airwaves," former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley said "the only ones mourning the loss of Soleimani" are Democrats. With Soleimani dead and Iran apparently backing down without killing any Americans, Trump can "pump himself up as a tough guy."

What next?

"The worst of the Iran crisis might be over," said Daniel Drezner in *The Washington Post*. Iran's leaders could have chosen a far bloodier means of reprisal but instead attacked military bases and even warned Iraq—which then warned the U.S.—that the missiles were coming. Trump has "powerful reasons" to stand down, as well. The American public has little desire for war with Iran, and a major military conflict in the Middle East "will not help him get re-elected." Still, the worst of Iran's revenge might still be in the offing, said Jim Geraghty in *NationalReview.com*. Iran "has a history of responding to attacks with terrorism through proxies." Iran's "symbolic" missile retaliation may have been designed to save face, "while Tehran plots a more dangerous operation for some time down the road."

GOP seeks to limit evidence in fast Senate trial

What happened

Democrats and Republicans deadlocked over President Trump's impeachment this week, with Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell announcing he has the votes he needs to begin a trial without witnesses, while House Speaker Nancy Pelosi stood firm in refusing to forward the articles of impeachment until she sees the Senate's proposed rules. "Sadly, Leader McConnell has made clear that his loyalty is to the President and not the Constitution," Pelosi wrote in a letter to fellow Democrats after McConnell's press conference. Democrats had held out hope that a handful of Republican senators—Mitt Romney of Utah, Susan Collins of Maine, and Lisa Murkowski of Alaska—would resist McConnell's efforts to speed on to a trial without an agreement to call witnesses. Those hopes were lifted Monday when former national security adviser John Bolton expressed willingness to testify if called. But the announcement from McConnell, who accused Pelosi of "shameless game playing," confirmed that those GOP senators weren't ready to buck their leadership.



McConnell: Home-field advantage

While it did not change McConnell's position, Bolton's announcement, made on his website this week, amplified pressure on Senate Republicans to allow new testimony. While he hasn't revealed what he might say under oath, others have testified that Bolton was appalled at Trump's withholding of military aid from Ukraine, and *The New York Times* reported last month that Bolton, Defense Secretary Mark Esper, and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo staged an intervention to try to convince the president to release the funding. Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer said that blocking testimony from such a key witness makes clear that Republicans "are participating in a cover-up."

What the editorials said

John Bolton "has made the Senate an offer it cannot refuse," said the *Los Angeles Times*. The GOP's plan to ram through a trial without his testimony is "an outrageous dereliction of their constitutional duty." To argue that it's only fair to stick with the same rules that governed Bill Clinton's trial is to ignore Trump's "blanket obstructionism." Recent revelations, including emails showing that Trump personally demanded that Ukraine's aid be withheld in spite

of Pentagon objections, have made clear that more of this story should come to light. Bolton has a tale to tell, and the nation needs to hear it.

This isn't a standoff, it's a defeat for the Democrats, said the *Washington Examiner*. Having rushed through an impeachment without sufficient evidence, they're not credible arguing for new witnesses. If they forward the articles and get voted down, they'll look weak and Trump will claim vindication. If they don't, "McConnell will shrug and smirk while Trump spends the next 10 months crowing" that they "lacked

the guts to make their case."

What the columnists said

Trump's acquittal may be a certainty, but the Republicans shouldn't be allowed to make a mockery of the proceedings, said **Chris Truax** in *USA Today*. Unless at least four Republicans observe their oath to "do impartial justice," this trial will be an exercise in rank partisanship. We know the moment we're facing is historic. "But we don't know whether it will be remembered as the day a handful of senators stepped up to impose integrity and the rule of law or the day American exceptionalism jumped the shark once and for all."

There's one problem with this idea, said **Noah Feldman** in *Bloomberg.com*: "Bolton is bluffing." He's gambling that with McConnell in charge, he'll never be called and can make a show of appearing cooperative. Even if Bolton does make it to the witness chair, don't be so sure he'll offer anything damning, said **Charles Sykes** in *TheBulwark.com*. "Bolton has strong incentives not to become Trump's John Dean." If he does, he loses his future in conservative politics, along with any hope of lucrative speaking engagements or a comfortable sinecure at a think tank.

Still, Republicans are playing a risky game, said **Noah Rothman** in *CommentaryMagazine.com*. Damaging details have emerged since the House impeachment, and more will follow. Better to have those details emerge now, during a Senate-controlled trial, than to face embarrassment in the heat of a presidential election, and let Democrats paint the president's acquittal "as perfunctory and flawed."

It wasn't all bad

■ Eva Gordon never got the chance to go to college, which was simply too expensive for her family. But thanks to Gordon's generosity, a lot of students will get the education she had to forgo. Gordon, who died at age 105, left nearly \$10 million to 17 community colleges across Washington state. A former trading assistant for a Seattle investment firm, she built her fortune by being both thrifty and a shrewd investor. "Eva had a tremendous heart," said her godson John Jacobs, "and liked to throw a rope to help people climb."

■ Kane Tanaka is living her dream. The Japanese great-grandmother celebrated her 117th birthday last week, stretching out her record as the world's oldest person. Tanaka said that she set herself the goal of becoming the planet's most senior citizen after turning 100. When she was recognized as



Celebrating her 117th

such by the Guinness Book of Records last year, Tanaka declared it the happiest day of her life. To celebrate hitting 117, the supercentenarian dressed up in a gold kimono for a party at her nursing home, where she was surrounded by friends and family. After taking a bite of her birthday cake, Tanaka declared: "Tasty, I want some more."

■ When Emily Jokinen opened her bedroom door at 3:45 a.m. to grab a pacifier for her month-old daughter, she was stunned to find a wet, shivering dog on her stairs. The malnourished stray had wandered into the home after a storm blew open the Philadelphia family's front door. The Jokinens decided to take in the poor pooch, which they named Suzy, and tweeted about their new pet. That post went viral, and in less than two days the family received \$15,000 in donations to pay Suzy's medical bills. Suzy is now happy and putting on weight. "In a way, this isn't our dog," said Emily's husband, Jack. "It's the internet's dog."

Democrats: Heading into Iowa, who has the momentum?

Election year has dawned, the Iowa caucuses are less than a month away, and somehow the “unsinkable Joe Biden” still leads the race for the Democratic nomination, said Alex Seitz-Wald in *NBCNews.com*. Much like Donald Trump in 2016, the gaffe-prone, 78-year-old Biden was expected to “flame out early.” Yet Biden, despite a predictable slew of “unforced errors” and out-of-touch comments on race and gender—not to mention President Trump’s efforts to drag his son Hunter into the Ukraine scandal—enters the primary season with the support of 28 percent of Democrats nationally. That’s down only a single point from when he announced his candidacy. Biden’s “myriad liabilities” still worry Democrats, said Eric Levitz in *NYMag.com*. He would be the oldest person, by eight years, ever to win the White House, and the party’s progressive base has not forgotten that Biden is “implicated in many of the biggest policy failures of the present era,” particularly his support for the Iraq War and the 1994 Crime Bill. Yet he has shown surprising resilience over the past year, managing the enviable trick of strongly appealing to both African-Americans and working-class whites. As long as “polls keep suggesting that Uncle Joe is the Democrats’ best bet for defeating Donald Trump,” the nomination is Biden’s to lose.

Biden may still be leading, said Philip Klein in *WashingtonExaminer.com*, but Bernie Sanders has the momentum. Even after suffering a heart attack in October, Sanders has kept his dedicated following, and has “demolished all rivals” in fundraising, with \$34.5 million in the fourth quarter of 2019. With rival progressive Sen. Elizabeth Warren fading, Sanders now shares the poll lead in Iowa with Biden and Pete Buttigieg, and leads the field in New Hampshire by 3 percentage points. It’s time to “stop treating the Sanders candidacy as



Sanders: Running strong in early states

a sideshow,” said Jason Riley in *The Wall Street Journal*. If the Vermont socialist wins one or more of the early primaries, many Democrats will start to question the perceived “electability” that is the foundation of Biden’s support—and Sanders might emerge as the front-runner.

Before it’s too late, Democrats should “take a long look at Amy Klobuchar,” said Steve Chapman in the *Chicago Tribune*. Not only is she female, a moderate like Biden, and a mere 59, but the same solid, Midwestern

pragmatism that made it hard for Klobuchar to “stand out in a crowded debate” could be very appealing to voters craving “a president they can occasionally forget about.” The wild card, said David Siders in *Politico.com*, is Michael Bloomberg. The billionaire businessman and former New York City mayor is apparently willing “to spend limitless sums” to defeat Trump. He’s ignoring the early primaries and will pour his resources into winning on delegate-rich Super Tuesday and in the big-state primaries that follow. If there’s “a protracted, ‘bizarro world’ Democratic primary” that produces no decisive winner, Bloomberg could emerge as the late, consensus alternative to Biden and Sanders.

If the race does drag on to the end, said John Fund in *National Review.com*, Democrats will be in serious trouble. The party is fractured between progressives and moderates and young and old, and all the candidates are “having trouble convincing voters outside their base that they can win.” Perhaps the party can heal its divisions at its convention in Milwaukee in July, and unify by the fall. But in drawing this field of opponents, “Donald Trump so far appears to be blessed with luck.”

Only in America

The University of Miami is warning students not to use the “dismissive” phrase “OK, Boomer.” University officials acknowledged that young people have “pent-up frustration” about having “inherited a planet plagued by the ravages of climate change.” But they said that “OK, Boomer” intolerantly portrays “older folks” as “out of touch” and “technologically impaired.”

California classrooms are getting emergency toilets for students to use during school-shooting lockdowns. Ventura County teacher Thomas Smith says his classroom’s “poop bucket” illustrates the country’s failure to prevent school shootings. Instead, Smith says, officials have settled for giving students a bucket to relieve themselves “while waiting to see if they will be shot instead of simply imprisoned for their own safety.”

Good week for:

Painful sacrifices, after designer Stella McCartney tweeted a photo of actor Joaquin Phoenix at the Golden Globes and praised him for “having chosen to wear this same Tux for the entire award season to reduce waste” and help save “the future of the planet.”

Nick Sandmann, the MAGA hat-wearing Covington Catholic High School student whose staredown with a Native American elder at the Lincoln Memorial became a national obsession last January. Sandmann received an unspecified settlement from CNN, which he’d sued for \$275 million for “vilifying and bullying him.”

Long attention spans, after author Robert Caro told *The New York Times* he’s 604 pages into the fifth and final volume of his biography of Lyndon Johnson, but is only up to 1965 in a saga that ends in 1968. “It’s going to be a very long book,” said Caro.

Bad week for:

Street cred, with news that Death Row Records, the hip-hop label founded by Dr. Dre and the now-jailed Suge Knight, is now a wholly owned subsidiary of the Hasbro toy company. “Our businesses are highly complementary, with substantial synergies and a great cultural fit,” said Hasbro chairman Brian Goldner.

Trolling, after Donald Trump Jr. posted a photo of himself holding an AR-15 rifle decorated with a Jerusalem cross from the Crusades and a decal of Hillary Clinton behind bars. A spokesman for Trump Jr. explained he enjoys “triggering humorless liberals.”

Arts and crafts, after two Mississippi men, Odis Latham and Russell Sparks, were charged with trying to claim a \$100,000 lottery prize with a ticket whose “winning” numbers were glued on.

FDA issues new vape restrictions

The Food and Drug Administration plans to ban the sale of sweet and fruity vaporizer cartridges, but anti-nicotine advocates say the Trump administration has capitulated to the e-cigarette industry. The new rules exempt menthol and tobacco flavors, as well as flavored liquids for “open tank” systems sold at vape shops. The banned flavors, favored by the roughly 5 million teens who vape, represented about 80 percent of retail e-cigarette sales last year, although industry leader Juul has already discontinued them. Teens also prefer prefilled cartridges to open-tank vapes. Yet after President Trump promised “very, very strong” action on vaping in September, he reportedly was dissuaded by lobbying, plus polling that showed a sweeping ban could hurt him in swing states.

Blaine, Wash.

Profiled: More than 60 Iranians and Iranian-Americans trying to return to the U.S. from Canada last week said they



Hekmati: 'This is not OK.'

were held for hours of additional questioning about their political views, relatives, and allegiances. Fears of military escalation with Iran led to heightened security at border checkpoints, and some individuals and families with green cards or U.S. passports were detained for up to 11 hours. Negah Hekmati, a U.S. citizen of Iranian descent, said she and her husband, a software engineer at Microsoft, were questioned for five hours by agents demanding to know the identities of Ms. Hekmati's parents, siblings, uncles, and cousins. "My kids shouldn't experience such things," Ms. Hekmati said. "They are U.S. citizens. This is not OK." Customs and Border Protection insisted that it did not single out Iranians based on their national origin, blaming delays on reduced holiday staffing.

Frankfort, Ky.

Pardons probed: Kentucky's new Republican attorney general formally requested an FBI probe last week into pardons issued by former Republican Gov. Matt Bevin after his failed re-election bid. Bevin's decision to pardon or commute the sentences of more than 650 people, including a man convicted of repeatedly raping and assaulting a 9-year-old girl, drew criticism from both parties, including from Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.). Though Bevin's orders benefited more than 300 nonviolent offenders, he was accused of also granting favors to supporters. One pardon went to Patrick Baker, who'd served two years of a 19-year sentence for homicide and robbery. Baker's brother had hosted a fundraiser for Bevin, and a GOP megadonor appealed to Bevin to pardon Baker, who has insisted he was framed by the police. Attorney General Daniel Cameron said he'd assist federal and local investigators.

New York City

Facing justice: Forty out of 120 potential jurors said they couldn't be impartial this week in Harvey Weinstein's trial, which could see testimony from actresses Salma Hayek, Rosie Perez, Charlize Theron, and Annabella Sciorra. The disgraced movie producer, 67, hobbled into court for jury selection using a walker, which some thought was a theatrical plea for sympathy. He's charged with forcing oral sex on a production assistant, Mimi Haley, at his Manhattan apartment in 2006 and raping a woman at a hotel in 2013. Numerous other women could be called to testify about Weinstein's alleged predations; his brother and producing partner, Robert, could also testify. In the courtroom, Judge James Burke threatened to jail Weinstein, who still wields two cell-phones, for texting in court. Just hours after the hearing—with timing that Weinstein's lawyers argued was calculated to taint the jury pool—Los Angeles prosecutors charged Weinstein with rape and sexual assault in separate 2013 incidents.



Perp walker

Los Angeles

Foreign currency: A major fundraiser for President Trump, Imaad Zuberi, said he'd plead guilty this week to obstructing a federal probe into whether foreign nationals used Trump's inauguration festivities to illegally funnel money.



Zuberi

Zuberi, a venture capitalist who has donated to both parties, gave \$900,000 to Trump's inaugural committee in the months after the 2016 election. At least \$50,000 of that reportedly came from a Turkish-American businessman with ties to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Zuberi allegedly backdated a check and deleted emails revealing his work as a middleman for the contribution. He pleaded guilty late last year to campaign finance violations, tax evasion, and failure to register as a foreign agent—admitting he told clients from Saudi Arabia, Libya, Venezuela, and Sri Lanka that he could influence foreign policy and boost their businesses. Prosecutors say he offered six witnesses more than \$6 million to keep quiet.

Nashville

Irreconcilable: The United Methodist Church announced plans last week to split into two branches, in a schism over same-sex marriage. The country's second-largest Protestant denomination, with roughly 9 million members, expects to let a "traditionalist" wing break off and take \$25 million. The remaining United Methodist Church would allow gay marriages and LGBTQ clergy for the first time, but any local church could vote to defect with the traditionalists (and take its building with it). The announcement heads off contentious sanctions that were set to take effect against pastors who officiated at gay weddings: a one-year suspension without pay for a first offense and removal from the clergy for a second. The Nashville-based church's large following in Africa has fiercely opposed liberal reform. Church leaders will vote on finalizing the split at their worldwide conference in May.

Puerto Rico

Dark again:

The strongest earthquake to hit Puerto Rico in a century killed at least one person, toppled buildings, and left about 93 percent of the island without power this week. The magnitude-6.4 earthquake originated off the island's southwestern coast following more than a week of relentless quakes and aftershocks—including a magnitude-5.8 quake a day earlier—unnerving residents still recovering from 2017's Hurricane Maria. An estimated 300,000 people were without water. The roof of a three-story school in Guánica collapsed—one of seven schools damaged with no students inside. Puerto Rico's electrical grid suffered damage despite \$3.2 billion in reinforcements since Maria. One quake destroyed Punta Ventana, a treasured stone arch creating a natural "window" to the sea. "I don't think Puerto Rico is ready for more devastation," said Yesenia Ramos, 53. "This looked the same as when Maria hit."



Quake aftermath



Seeking refuge in the U.S.

Mexico City

Asylum anger: Mexico is upset over a Trump administration decision to send Mexicans who seek asylum in the U.S. to Guatemala instead. “It’s a decision that worries us and a decision that we cannot agree with,” said Mexico’s ambassador to the U.S., Martha Bárcena. The U.S. signed a “safe third country” pact

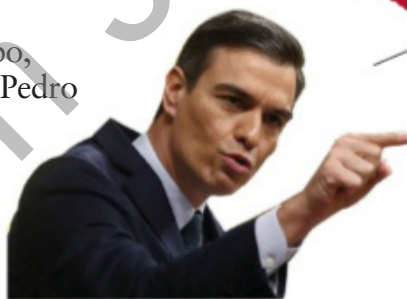
with Guatemala last year that will see Hondurans and Salvadorans who seek asylum in the U.S. settled there, even though the State Department considers it one of the world’s most dangerous countries. Now Guatemala will also host Mexican asylum seekers, many of whom fear they’ll be targeted by drug gangs. “Imagine if they send us there,” said Manuela Morales, 37, who has been waiting for months in a Mexican camp near the U.S. border for her asylum claim to be processed. “We’ll be killed directly.”

Mexico City

Counting the disappeared: More than 60,000 people have been forcibly disappeared and likely murdered in Mexico since the country ramped up its war on drug cartels in 2006, government officials announced this week. The grim figure is based on a review of data from state prosecutors and is 50 percent higher than the previous official estimate of 40,000 missing, given out in 2018. The “disappeared” toll is separate from the number of recorded homicides, which topped 31,000 last year alone. President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, who took office in 2018, has made identifying and finding the disappeared a priority.

Madrid

Left-wing government: After nearly a year of political limbo, Spain finally has a government. Caretaker Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez eked out parliamentary approval this week for a coalition between his center-left Socialist party and the far-left Unidas Podemos, with 167 lawmakers voting in favor and 165 against. Because of the key role played by separatist Basque and Catalan parties in the vote—their lawmakers abstained—Pablo Casado, leader of the center-right People’s Party, accused Sánchez of pandering to “terrorists and coup mongers.” The Socialists and Podemos will hold only 155 of the 350 seats in Parliament; it is Spain’s first coalition government since the return of democracy in the 1970s. Spain has been without a government since an indecisive election in April; another election in November also failed to produce a clear winner.



Sánchez: In power

Caracas

Who controls parliament? Control of Venezuela’s only remaining democratically elected body, the all-but-powerless National Assembly, was in flux this week after supporters of authoritarian President Nicolás Maduro blocked opposition lawmakers from the chamber and voted in a new speaker to replace opposition leader Juan Guaidó. But Guaidó, recognized as Venezuela’s rightful interim president by the U.S. and most Western countries, forced his way into the legislature along with supporters. “This is proof of what’s possible if we’re firmly united and organized,” Guaidó said, adding that the election of Maduro ally Luis Parra as speaker was invalid because the chamber had lacked a quorum. The opposition leader’s attempt to unseat Maduro has sputtered out in recent months, and Venezuela remains in crisis, with shortages of food and medicine and runaway inflation.



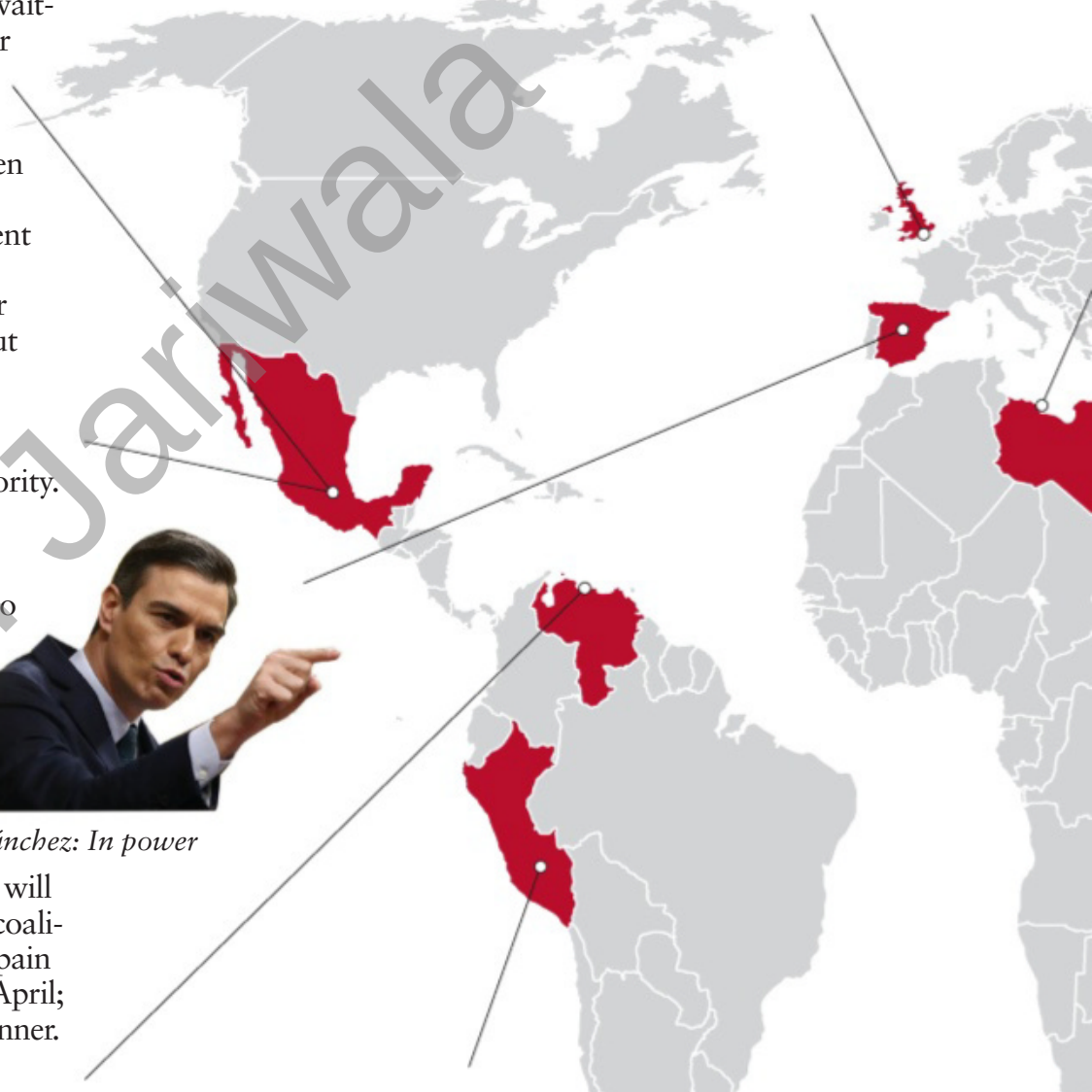
Guaidó: Defiant

London

Harry and Meghan quit: The British royal family reacted with surprise this week after Prince Harry and Meghan Markle announced they would be “stepping back” from their roles as senior royals. The couple said they would “work to become financially independent” and “carve out a progressive new role” in the monarchy. The couple plan to split their time between North America and the U.K. as they launch a charity. Harry complained last year that the British press had waged a “ruthless campaign” of harassment, much of it racist, against his biracial American wife. Buckingham Palace said that it understood the couple’s “desire to take a different approach, but these are complicated issues that will take time to work through.”



Leaving the spotlight

**Machu Picchu, Peru**

Trash crisis: Peru is asking tourists to quit buying bottled water to take on treks to Machu Picchu, because local authorities are struggling to cope with the 5 tons of trash dumped every day at the 15th-century Inca citadel. A nearby plant crushes 1 ton of plastic bottles a day into dense plastic blocks that can be hauled out of the mountaintop area on trains—there are no roads up to the protected site—but it can’t keep up with the waste. Two years ago, UNESCO threatened to withdraw World Heritage status from the site because so much litter was ending up in the rivers, contaminating the surroundings. Since then, authorities have begun installing bottle-filling stations and are urging tourists to carry reusable bottles.



Too much garbage

Sirte, Libya

Turkey enters fray: Turkey announced this week that it would send troops to Libya to support the country's besieged United Nations-backed central government. The government has been losing ground to rebel forces led by Gen. Khalifa Hifter, who is supported by Russia, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates. Hifter's fighters this week swept into the strategic city of Sirte, reducing the government's control to a strip of coastline around the capital, Tripoli. In a sign that Turkey and Russia may be seeking to divvy up the country, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Russian President Vladimir Putin jointly called for a cease-fire just days after Turkey's announcement. Analysts suspect that Russia wants to create a naval base in eastern Libya, while Turkey wants to protect a maritime border deal it signed with the Tripoli government that aids its claims to offshore drilling rights in the eastern Mediterranean.

Kerman, Iran

Soleimani funeral stampede: A funeral procession for slain Iranian Gen. Qassem Soleimani in his hometown of Kerman turned deadly this week, after a stampede left at least 56 people dead and 214 injured. Hundreds of thousands of people chanting "Death to America" had poured into the streets to pay tribute to the Quds Force leader—a revered figure in Iran—who was killed by a U.S. drone strike last week. Witnesses wrote on social media that the street leading to the funeral was too narrow to handle the massive crowd and that side streets had been shut off, so those caught in the crush had nowhere to flee. Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's Supreme Leader, wept and led prayers at the funeral; Soleimani was his close ally and seen as a future top contender for the country's presidency.



Mourning the general

New Delhi

Hindu mob attacks university: Shouting "Hail Lord Ram!"—a Hindu god—dozens of masked men stormed one of India's most prestigious universities this week, beating male and female students and professors with rods and bricks and injuring at least 42 people. Police called to the scene did not intervene and allowed the attackers to leave without arrest. Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi has long been a bastion of left-wing, secularist politics, and many of those brutalized had vocally opposed a new citizenship law passed by the Hindu nationalist government that is widely seen as anti-Muslim. "The mob violence could not have been possible without the active connivance of the administration and deliberate inaction by Delhi police," said the JNU teachers' union.

Tokyo



Maezawa

Free money: Japanese fashion tycoon Yusaku Maezawa is giving away \$9 million in \$9,000 chunks to his Twitter followers to see if a windfall can increase happiness. The one-off payments of 1 million yen will go to the first 1,000 people who retweet his New Year's message. "It's a serious social experiment," said Maezawa, the 44-year-old founder of online retailer Zozotown. He said he wants to spark a debate in Japan about whether to implement a universal basic income, which would guarantee a minimum monthly payment to every citizen, no strings attached. Maezawa, who is worth about \$2 billion, paid an undisclosed amount of money last year to become the first private passenger to fly around the moon with Elon Musk's SpaceX.

Tehran

Suspicious crash: A Ukrainian International Airlines plane bound for Kiev went down shortly after takeoff in Tehran this week, killing all 176 people aboard—including 63 Canadian passengers and 11 Ukrainians. The crash of the three-year-old Boeing 737-800 came just hours after Iran launched more than 20 ballistic missiles at U.S. bases in Iraq. Tehran said the plane had suffered engine failure, causing the pilots to lose control. But there was some speculation that the 737 might have been accidentally shot down by an Iranian air-defense missile. Aviation security expert Todd Curtis said that based on videos and photos of the crash site, it appeared as though the plane was coming apart before it hit the ground. "I didn't see a large central crater," he said.



Collecting the bodies

Manda Bay, Kenya

Americans killed by al-Shabab: A U.S. Army specialist and two American contractors were killed in a predawn raid on a military base in Kenya by al Qaeda-linked terrorists this week. Some 200 American soldiers, airmen, sailors, and Marines, as well as about 100 Pentagon civilian employees and contractors, are stationed in Kenya to assist in the country's battle against al-Shabab, a jihadist group based in neighboring Somalia. The militants also destroyed two U.S. helicopters, two small planes, and multiple vehicles. "Alongside our African and international partners, we will pursue those responsible for this attack," said U.S. Army Gen. Stephen Townsend, head of the U.S. Africa command. The U.S. carried out a record 63 drone strikes last year on al-Shabab sites in Somalia. This is the first time the group has attacked American forces in Kenya.



After the attack

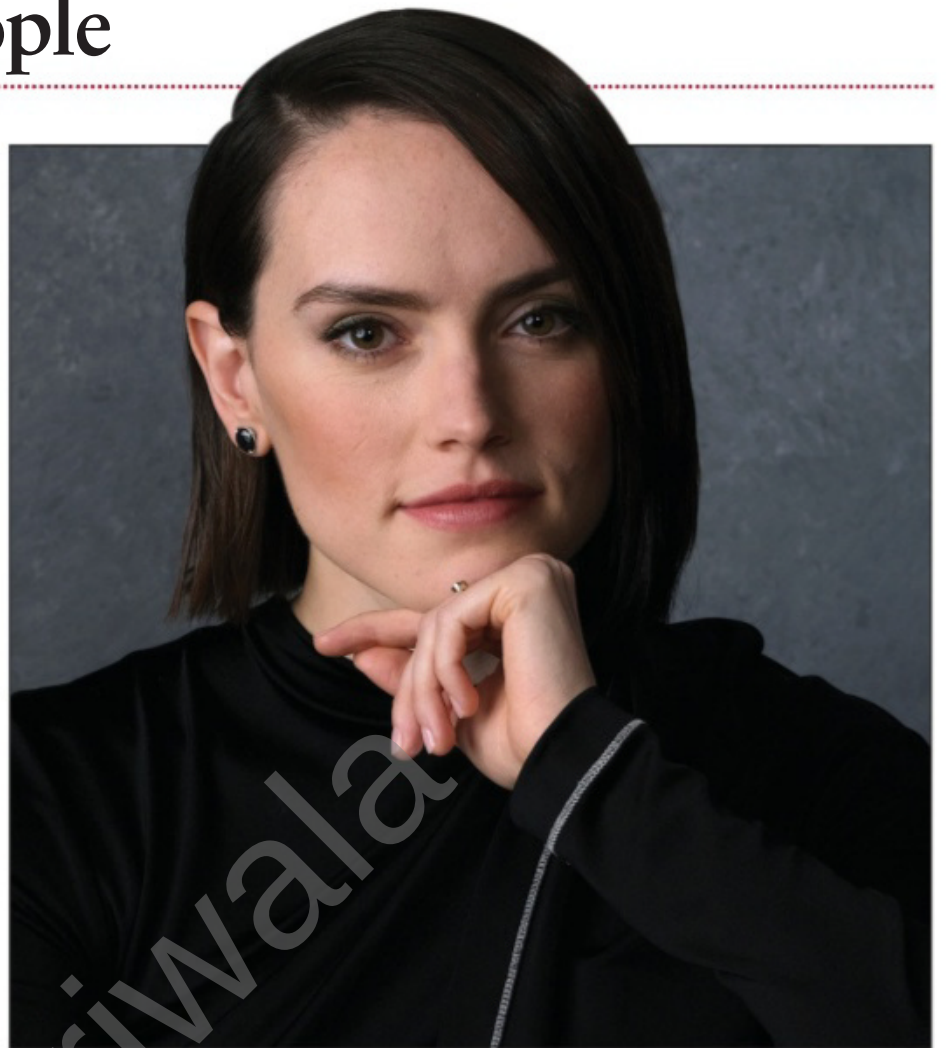
How Watts deals with aging



Naomi Watts is candid about the challenges of middle age, says Fiona Golfar in *The Times* (U.K.). The British-born actress and mother of two turned 51 last September after breaking up with her partner of 11 years, Liev Schreiber, in 2016. She says she has discovered that life gets harder when youth is gone, and that “it takes a lot of work and commitment to stay sane.” As people face their mortality, she says, “we get more vulnerable, we get more delicate and fragile. I know that’s dark thinking, but it’s honest.” She no longer has the feeling of invincibility that enables people in their 20s and 30s to sacrifice sleep and stability for their ambition. “Now I have to force myself to not operate like that,” she says, “and give myself the break and let myself admit that I’m not going to be on my game at all times.” Menopause has brought a major adjustment, but she says it’s “such a shame” women are afraid to talk about it. “We need support from each other, and to not be made to feel like unsexy, infertile, crabby old ladies that should be sent out to pasture. We actually have wisdom and compassion that far outweighs youthful arrogance. Along with some mood swings and floods of tears.”

The CIA’s master of disguises

Jonna Mendez once gave President George H.W. Bush an intelligence briefing while wearing a mask, said Elizabeth Winkler in *The Wall Street Journal*. The CIA’s former “chief of disguise” had “borrowed the face” of a female colleague for the meeting in order to demonstrate for Bush the agency’s latest disguise techniques. Bush, a former CIA director, suspected nothing; Mendez removed her mask only after he failed to guess what was amiss. “So, I just took it off. I did the Tom Cruise peel before Tom Cruise did,” she says, referring to the famous scene from *Mission: Impossible*. “I think they should call it the Jonna Mendez peel.” During her 27 years in the CIA’s Office of Technical Services, Mendez studied the techniques of Hollywood’s best makeup artists and crafted the wigs, prosthetic noses, false teeth, and masks that allowed undercover field agents to elude foreign intelligence services—especially the estimated 50,000 KGB agents prowling Moscow. She could turn two people into twins and men into women and women into men—all so enemy spies would follow the wrong person. Today, she’s a distinguished retiree whose masks are memorialized at the International Spy Museum in Washington, D.C. But she still retains her old skills—and the ability to spot illusion when practiced by others. “Don’t ever walk by me,” she says, “wearing a toupee.”



Ridley’s privacy problem

Daisy Ridley got some good advice from the late Carrie Fisher, said Nosheen Iqbal in *The Guardian*. After Ridley was chosen to play Rey in the latest *Star Wars* trilogy, Fisher warned her: Be careful about whom you date. “You don’t want to give people the ability to say, ‘I slept with Princess Leia.’” Ridley, now 27, admits she has struggled with the adjustment to the global fame that the film series has brought her. “I have a thing with control,” she says. “I texted my friend the other day and I was, like, ‘Dude, please don’t put pictures of me online.’ Because it’s that weird disconnect, that people don’t ask people’s permission before they post things.” Ridley won’t discuss her private life, has given up social media, and tells friends when they get together to stow their phones. “I’m like, ‘You can’t say where we are...because it’s not safe. You’re telling 50,000 people where you are right at that moment? It’s scary.’” Ridley says she knows she’s lucky to be in such an iconic film series but can’t hide her irritation at how people react to her. When she recently attended a family wedding, “people assumed they knew me and only directed questions to me. My sister, who was with me, was basically ignored. I cannot stand that. It’s just rude.”

In the news

■ Jeffrey Epstein’s alleged procurer, **Ghislaine Maxwell**, is hiding in homes of powerful associates around the world, the *New York Post* reported last week. The FBI is investigating Maxwell, 58, who’s accused of recruiting girls to have sex with Epstein and his wealthy buddies. Mostly invisible since 2016, the Brit is traveling among “safe houses” in the U.K., Israel, and elsewhere abroad, a source told the *Post*. Epstein died in jail last August of an apparent suicide by hanging, and *60 Minutes* this week revealed photos of



his jail cell and his neck wounds. Dr. Michael Baden, hired by Epstein’s brother to investigate, said he’s never seen a jail hanging break a neck in three places, as Epstein’s did; other pathologists have disagreed. Photos showed several nooses fashioned from bedding in his Manhattan cell, plus a note left by Epstein complaining about the food and life behind bars. “Giant bugs crawling over my hands,” Epstein wrote. “No fun!!”

■ Longtime PBS host **Tavis Smiley** spent years sexually harassing and pursuing sexual relationships with subordinates and guests on his show, according to an external investigation released last week. Smiley, 55, sued PBS after being fired in 2018, claiming he had only consensual relationships with employees. Yet several women told investigators that Smiley

subjected them to unwanted advances, including inappropriate touching, sexual comments, and requests that they “hook up.” Smiley denied the allegations, which he called “weak,” and said he was looking forward to “my day in court.”

■ **Nick Gordon** died of a suspected heroin overdose on New Year’s Day, three years after he was found liable in the drug-related death of his fiancée, Whitney Houston’s daughter Bobbi Kristina Brown. Gordon, 30, overdosed in an Orlando hotel room. He was engaged to Brown in 2015 when the 22-year-old was found facedown in a bathtub and went into a coma. Gordon was accused of drugging her, and was ordered to pay her estate \$36 million. Houston drowned in a bathtub in 2012 while under the influence of multiple legal and illegal substances.

Taking the beef out of burgers

Sales are booming for alternative meats. Are plant-based burgers just a fad?

Why are meatless burgers so popular?

Food scientists believe they've achieved a kind of alchemy, making plants look and taste like meat. Global sales suggest they've largely succeeded. All-plant burgers, nuggets, meatballs, and sausage patties exploded in popularity last year, driven by California-based Beyond Meat and Impossible Foods. Beyond had 2019's most successful IPO and gained a presence in 20,000 U.S. grocery stores plus 53,000 fast-food restaurants such as Dunkin' Donuts and Carl's Jr., while McDonald's is testing a Beyond Burger in Canada. Burger King's Impossible Whopper and White Castle's Impossible Sliders were almost *too* successful, causing a supply crisis. Overall U.S. restaurant sales of plant-based meat grew by 400 percent last year; combine those with supermarket sales, and consumers spent nearly \$1 billion on these products in 2019. Plant-based burgers attract eaters who are health conscious and/or environmentally concerned but aren't willing to give up familiar tastes and textures for quinoa and seitan. Ninety-five percent of Impossible's customers eat meat; in taste tests, half of them can't tell Impossible Burgers from the real thing.

What's their secret?

"Meat analogues" such as tofu go back 2,000 years, but these are not your father's frozen veggie burgers. The new faux burgers are engineered to imitate the way ground meat sizzles on the grill, bleeds in the middle, and crumbles in your mouth. That's no small feat, considering cooked beef contains 4,000 different molecules, about 100 of which create its smell and umami-rich flavor. Impossible Foods simulates that pinkish color and savory flavor with heme, the iron-carrying molecule in blood and some plant roots. The heme is created by genetically modifying yeast with soy DNA in gigantic tanks.

What else are they made of?

The new burgers vary in composition, but are largely made of plant proteins—usually soy, but sometimes pea, bean, or wheat—and plant fats. These ingredients are cooked in big pressure cookers, which use low heat and compression to replicate the fibrous texture of meat. The first challenge in creating a plant-based burger is to make a tasteless patty, getting rid of so-called off-flavors. (Pea protein is said to taste of urine.) "Once we cracked the code on meat flavor," said Impossible Foods scientist Laura Kliman, "if you change a few of the ratios and ingredients, it's not that hard to get fish or pork or chicken." Impossible Burgers have 21 ingredients—mostly soy and



A Beyond Burger: Pea protein, beetroot juice, and fat

potato proteins, plus coconut and sunflower oils.

Beyond Burgers have 18 ingredients, a mixture of isolated pea protein, mung bean, and rice proteins. Beetroot juice provides the "bleeding" effect. The thickener methylcellulose, potato starch for texture, and the salt substitute potassium chloride are also used. Beyond Burgers get the marbled look of ground beef from coconut oil and cocoa butter whipped into tiny globules of fat.

Is that healthier than meat?

Yes and no. Consuming meat is believed to increase the risk of cardiovascular disease and colorectal cancer, and humans can develop unsafe resistance to antibiotics by eating animals fed those drugs. Commercial beef, pork, and poultry often carry bacteria and viruses from fecal matter and cause illness if not properly cooked or handled. Critics of alternative meat, however, say that companies are exploiting the healthy sound of "plant-based" while providing heavily engineered products. Whole Foods CEO John Mackey, for example, has warned customers that these burgers "are super, highly processed foods." Meatless burgers are cholesterol free and contain about the same calorie count as hamburgers but have more sodium: The Impossible Whopper has 1,240 milligrams of sodium, 260 more than the beef version. Coconut oil gives Beyond and Impossible Burgers saturated fat levels similar to beef, and their proteins are considered less nutritious. Impossible's recipe depends on soy, which can mimic estrogen in the body, but food scientists say it's safe to consume in moderate quantities.

Is the meat industry alarmed?

Stanford University biochemist Patrick Brown, who founded Impossible Foods (see box), says it should be. "We plan to take a double-digit portion of the beef market within five years," he said, "and then we can push that industry, which is fragile and has low margins, into a death spiral." That's unlikely. Americans on average eat three hamburgers a week, and the combined annual revenue of the three largest U.S. meatpacking companies is about \$200 billion. Still, the meat industry clearly feels threatened: Lobbyists convinced 12 state legislatures last year to ban products from using words such as "burger" and "meat" if they don't come from animals. But to hedge their bets and to take advantage of the boom, Perdue, Nestlé, Kellogg, and meat giant Tyson Foods are developing their own plant-based or hybrid burgers. As Tyson's former CEO Tom Hayes said, "If you can't beat 'em, join 'em, right?"

The environmental impact of livestock

Environmentalists estimate that eating 4 pounds of beef contributes as much to global warming as flying from New York to London, and the average American eats more than that each month. There are many ways of producing meat, but it's clear that the annual farming and slaughter of 50 billion animals for meat worldwide leaves a massive footprint in terms of land use, crop consumption, emissions, and water pollution. In the past 25 years, an area larger than South America has been razed for cattle grazing, and cows releasing methane from digesting grains and grass—mostly through burps—causes two-thirds of the livestock sector's greenhouse gas emissions. A landmark report in *Science* found that avoiding meat and dairy is the "single biggest way" to reduce one's environmental impact. A recent University of Michigan study found that a plant-based burger generates 90 percent less greenhouse gas, requires 46 percent less energy, and has 99 percent less impact on water scarcity than a quarter pound of U.S. beef. CEO Pat Brown says that's Impossible Foods' primary purpose. "We see our mission as the last chance to save the planet from environmental catastrophe," he says.

Presidential primaries are broken

David Leonhardt
NYTimes.com

Let's face it, "the presidential nominating process is absurd," said David Leonhardt. Currently, the Democrats' seven leading candidates include three in their 70s, two businessmen who've never held any elective office—Andrew Yang and Tom Steyer—and Mayor Pete Buttigieg, who has never won more than 10,991 votes in an election. Why have they outlasted more accomplished governors and senators? Both the Democrats and the Republicans greatly diminished the influence of party leaders in the 1970s, but the supposedly more democratic process now in place has "come to resemble a reality television show." Debate gaffes and one-liners, polls, and fundraising determine who survives, with a small number of highly partisan voters in early-primary states often choosing "a nominee whom most people don't want." That's how Donald Trump—then loathed by at least half of Republican voters and nearly all GOP leaders—hijacked the nomination in 2016. In the past, the parties had "a big incentive to choose a broadly liked candidate"—which is how we wound up with nominees such as Abraham Lincoln, both Roosevelts, and Dwight Eisenhower. "I'm not suggesting we return to the smoke-filled rooms of the past," but major reform is needed.

Admiring a fantasy Russia

Anne Applebaum
TheAtlantic.com

We are experiencing a curious new phenomenon, said Anne Applebaum—right-wing nationalists who disdain America and admire Russia. Disgusted by multiculturalism, the decline of religion, and what they believe is the "degeneracy" of American society, some conservatives and evangelicals now see in Russia "the shimmering lure" of a unified, homogenous nation that has resisted change and political correctness. Alt-right godfather Patrick Buchanan has been lavishly praising Russian President Vladimir Putin, pointing to Putin's promotion of Orthodox Christian symbolism, anti-gay policies, and "traditional values." Fox News host Tucker Carlson—a white nationalist who has wondered "How precisely is diversity our strength?"—even said he was rooting for Russia in its conflict with Ukraine. But if these Putin fans actually experienced "the reality of Russia," they'd be horrified. Only 15 percent of Russians say religion plays an important role in their lives. The country has one of the highest abortion rates in the world. Russia's percentage of Muslims is six times higher than ours, and one of its provinces, Chechnya, is *officially* ruled by sharia law. Putin's American fans hate modern America, so they pine for "a fantasy nation" that does not exist.

The era of faked videos is here

Greg Sargent
WashingtonPost.com

"If you thought the 2016 election was awash in disinformation and lies, get ready," said Greg Sargent. A "disinformation tsunami" is coming. A few weeks ago, a video of Democrat Joe Biden deceptively edited to make him sound like a white nationalist was widely circulated via Twitter. In responding to an audience question about domestic violence and sexual assault, Biden delivered a typical rambling 13-minute monologue. But in the edited, 19-second video, the context and beginning and end of the sentences are clipped out, and Biden is shown saying only that our culture "is not imported from some African nation or some Asian nation. It's our English jurisprudential culture." Sounds like Steve Bannon, right? In his unedited remarks, Biden actually said that we need to *change* a historical legal culture that makes it difficult to prosecute sexual assault. Much more fakery of this type is coming. Last year, another widely circulated video slowed down Nancy Pelosi's speech to make her seem drunk. The Russians are likely to flood social media with more disinformation in 2020, and we may also see "deepfakes"—realistic computer-generated videos depicting candidates saying or doing things they've never said or done. Let the viewer beware.

Viewpoint

"The past decade saw the rise of the woke progressives who dictate what words can be said and ideas held, thus poisoning and paralyzing American humor, drama, entertainment, culture, and journalism. In the coming 10 years someone will effectively stand up to them. Their entire program is accusation: You are racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic; you are a bigot, a villain, a white male, a patriarchal misogynist, your day is over. They claim to be vulnerable victims, and moral. Actually they're not. They're mean and seek to kill, and like all bullies are cowards."

Peggy Noonan in *The Wall Street Journal*

It must be true... I read it in the tabloids

■ A North Carolina couple called the cops after being woken by loud banging noises from downstairs—only to find that the apparent intruder was a robot vacuum cleaner. Thomas Milam said that when the banging began, he and his wife cowered in the bedroom closet and phoned 911. Police found a brand-new robotic vacuum that had somehow turned itself on, got stuck, and kept bumping against a wall. "It's definitely better to be safe than sorry," said Milam. "I still would have called the police, because you just never know."



■ Several motorists spent New Year's Eve trapped in their cars on a Washington state highway by giant piles of tumbleweed 30 feet high. After high winds blew in the weeds, five cars and one truck were buried for hours before snowplows were able to clear the road. "People were still stuck at midnight and rang in the new year trapped under the weeds," said State Trooper Chris Thorson, who described the incident as "Tumblegeddon."

■ A Texas boy set his family home's front lawn on fire using his Christmas gift: a magnifying glass. Cayden Parson, 12, and his brothers used the lens to burn holes in a newspaper in the driveway. But a gust of wind spread burning embers, setting the yard ablaze. "The boys came running into the house telling us that a corner of the lawn was on fire and the Christmas lights were melting," said his mom, Nissa-Lynn. She and other family members extinguished the blaze with a hose and pitchers of water. "Instead of a tragedy," said Nissa-Lynn, "it will now be a Christmas to remember."




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FRANCE

Ignoring the crimes of our intellectual elite

Marie-Estelle Pech
Le Figaro

#MeToo has finally come for Gabriel Matzneff, said Marie-Estelle Pech. The 83-year-old French author has been writing and talking about his sexual relationships with teenage boys and girls for decades. In the 1970s, he published a notorious essay titled *The Under-16s*, and on TV appearances he made no secret of his sex tourism trips to Asia, where he preyed on young boys. In a 1990 talk show appearance—footage of which is now being shared widely online—Matzneff explained that he preferred innocent girls because he had no success with jaded women of 25. These confessions “offended nobody in the literary and

journalistic world” at the time. Matzneff was even given a yearly public stipend to live on, because his works, though they never sold well, were considered to have “contributed to the influence of French-language literature.” Today, though, we are looking at Matzneff with new eyes. One of his alleged victims, Vanessa Springora, now 47, has just published *Consent*, a memoir that details how Matzneff groomed and overpowered her when she was 14 and he was in his 50s. The Paris prosecutor last week opened a statutory rape investigation against Matzneff. Will this self-proclaimed pedophile spend his final years behind bars?

AUSTRIA

A new model for green conservatism

Andreas Khol
Der Standard

Austria’s conservative People’s Party and the leftist Greens agreed to form a coalition government last week, said Andreas Khol—and this bizarre political marriage just might work. The deal comes seven months after the last government headed by People’s Party leader Sebastian Kurz collapsed in scandal, when the leader of his junior coalition partner—the far-right Freedom Party—was caught on camera soliciting bribes from a purported Russian oligarch. The Freedom Party and the center-left Social Democrats were trounced in September’s snap elections, leaving the People’s Party and the Greens as the two big winners. In years past, an alliance between these ideological

opposites would have been out of the question. But the Green Party is no longer focused on far-left social policies that are “red flags for conservatives.” Instead, its key goal is to mitigate climate change—and that’s something the People’s Party can get behind. Today’s Austrians take for granted both the welfare state and the market economy, which means old left-right divisions aren’t as stark as they once were. Instead, both sides want to tackle global warming, control immigration, and reform education. So Kurz, 33, will once again be chancellor *and* the world’s youngest national leader. And Austria’s coalition of odd bedfellows could become “a model for Europe.”

How they see us: Will Europe support U.S. on Iran?

“The killing of Iranian Gen. Qassem Soleimani will go down as a turning point” in the history of the Western alliance, said Christiane Hoffmann in *Der Spiegel* (Germany). It’s not just that U.S. President Donald Trump failed to consult with or even inform his European allies before launching the drone strike that killed the head of Iran’s notorious Quds Force. It’s also that he has abandoned Western values altogether. With his threats to destroy Iranian cultural treasures should Tehran retaliate, Trump has shown his willingness to violate international law and adopt the barbarism of the Taliban, which demolished Afghanistan’s famed Bamiyan Buddhas in 2001. Europe “must distance itself” from this “madman in the White House” who has set America “so clearly against Western principles.” Sadly, our leaders have not done so. In a meek joint statement, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, French President Emmanuel Macron, and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson merely called on Iran to refrain from escalation.

The U.S.’s failure to give advanced warning to its NATO partners was a shocking breach of the alliance, said Rui Tavares in *Público* (Portugal). In the event of Iranian retaliation, many NATO countries have troops in harm’s way. Britain has some 400 troops in Iraq, and Italy more than 1,000 peacekeepers in Lebanon. And if Iran hits the U.S., we will be obliged to come to America’s aid because Article 5 of NATO’s founding treaty “states that an attack on one ally is an attack on all states.” It doesn’t matter that America started this mess. Remember, Iran



Protesters burn U.S. and British flags in Tehran.

was contained and abiding by the 2015 nuclear deal—signed by the U.S., the European Union, Russia, China, and other powers—until Trump withdrew from the pact in 2018 and slapped punishing sanctions on Tehran. The EU tried to keep the deal alive, but Tehran has now signaled it is beyond resuscitation.

Europe has no choice but to support America, said Angelo Panebianco in *Corriere della Sera* (Italy). What’s the alternative? It’s not as though Europe has “more affinity with Russia than

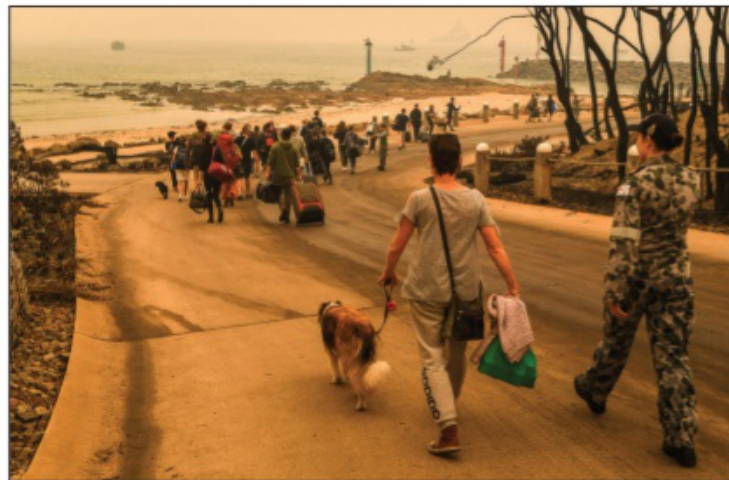
with America, or with Iran than with Israel.” And frankly, greater U.S. engagement in the Middle East might help stabilize the region: Look at what happened when America walked away from Libya, which is now “in the hands of the Russians and the Turks,” and Syria, which is dominated by Russia and Iran.

Turkey can exploit this situation, said Serkan Demirtas in *Hürriyet* (Turkey). The U.S. has continued to back Kurdish militants in Syria, claiming they are allies in the fight against ISIS, despite our protests that these fighters support separatist terrorists inside Turkey. Ankara has told Washington that it might have to boot American forces from Incirlik Air Base in southern Turkey; so far, the U.S. has shrugged at the warning. But that threat now has a new significance, because the air base will prove crucial should Iran start attacking American troops in the region. If the U.S. wants Turkish support against Iran, it will have to cut off the Syrian Kurds.

Australia: A lack of leadership as nation burns

Welcome to hell on earth, said *The Australian* in an editorial. After three years of drought and record temperatures, Australia has exploded into flames in the worst bushfire season in living memory. At least 24 people have been killed by the blazes, which began in September and have consumed some 15 million acres—more than triple the area destroyed by the 2018 California wildfires. With at least 1,300 homes reduced to cinders and thousands of people displaced, the government last week took the unprecedented step of calling up 3,000 military reservists to help battle the flames and conduct evacuations. Two naval vessels rescued 1,000 locals and vacationers stranded on a beach for days as fire encircled the remote coastal town of Mallacoota—the largest peacetime maritime evacuation in Australia’s history. The “selfless dedication and herculean work” of fire crews—many of whom are volunteers—police, medics, and military personnel in the face of this inferno have been “little short of miraculous.” But the Australian summer still has months to go, and much more will be demanded of our exhausted emergency service workers.

As Australia burns, conservative Prime Minister Scott Morrison “ducks and weaves,” said David Crowe in *The Sydney Morning Herald*. He had to be shamed into cutting short his pre-Christmas vacation in Hawaii to return for the funerals of two volunteer firefighters, and he has refused to order an emergency meeting of federal and state leaders to coordinate the national response. When



Evacuating from fire-ravaged Mallacoota

opposition center-left Labor Party leader Anthony Albanese suggested compensation for volunteer firefighters, “Morrison was dismissive at first,” but later announced one-off payments of up to \$4,200. With all this dithering, it’s unsurprising that Morrison has been jeered and booed when he’s visited scorched towns.

The “elephant in the room is climate change,” said Ellen Whinnett in the *Courier-Mail*. Morrison refuses to consider weaning the economy from dependence on fossil fuels, saying

that as the world’s largest exporter of coal and liquefied natural gas, Australia simply can’t afford to shutter those industries. It’s not just Morrison’s Liberals who are struggling with climate change—no Australian party has a coherent response to the conundrum. Australia produces less than 2 percent of global emissions, so even if we went to zero we wouldn’t save the planet. Yet as a wealthy country, we should be “showing leadership.”

“What’s unfolding right now is really just a taste of the new normal,” said Australian climate scientist Joëlle Gergis in *The Guardian.com*. I fear that we’ve reached a tipping point in human-caused climate change and that “weather conditions considered extreme by today’s standards will seem sedate in the future.” We urgently need to cut our greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to a rapidly destabilizing world. “There genuinely is no more time to waste. We must act as though our home is on fire—because it is.”

CUBA

Why no solidarity for dissidents?

Gabriel Salvia
Clarín (Argentina)

Venezuelans, Bolivians, and Chileans are all demanding greater democracy—and their fellow Latin Americans are cheering them on. So why does Cuba get a pass? asked Gabriel Salvia. The last freely contested election in Cuba was in 1948, and the country has been a one-party dictatorship under the Castros since 1959. Just last year, a new constitution was adopted that “enshrines political segregation and prevents people from speaking out against the government’s political cult.” Latin Americans claim to support democracy, yet here in our midst is a country we all do business with that enforces a single political ideology and threatens violence against citizens who dare to dissent. Cuba

is even now imprisoning political dissidents, homosexuals, and artists. It forbids pro-democracy activists from leaving the country. It confines journalists to house arrest. Frankly, Latin America’s “political indifference” to the repression of Cubans is hypocritical and unacceptable. Remember the teaching of the great Czech dissident Vaclav Havel, who after years in Communist prisons rose to become president of a finally free Czechoslovakia: As we fight for our own freedom, we must also fight to free others. Until Latin Americans wholeheartedly reject the Cuban regime and stand behind Cuban dissidents, “we cannot demand or expect more, or better, democracy in other countries in our region.”

CHINA

Give the kids a break this holiday

Lu Yuanzhi
Global Times

Chinese kids are cruelly overscheduled, said Lu Yuanzhi. This time of year, parents looking to spend their year-end bonuses will check their children’s school grades. Those kids who aren’t in the top half of their classes will be sent to pricey “cram schools” over the winter holidays. But don’t think that the children who earn high marks will get a well-deserved break. No, those diligent scholars will be loaded up with extracurricular classes meant to round out their education. My cousin, who is in his last year of elementary school, “used to be a lively boy” but is now glum, because my aunt has filled every minute of

his holidays with piano, chess, swimming, and English lessons, so he can’t play with his friends. Of course, his friends probably wouldn’t be able to hang out anyway, because their parents have scheduled extra classes for them as well. The average Chinese family spends some \$17,000 a year on extracurricular enrichment for their kids to ensure that they not only are good at math and chemistry but also can sail, or golf, or speak French. Parents—like my aunt—who once pledged not to pile on the activities are made to fear their kid is “falling behind.” The result is “all work and no play”—and that’s not a “healthy lifestyle.”



Regular walks and jogs are better, but in a pinch you can compress a workout into just a few minutes.

Life-hacking the new year

Easy ways to boost your fitness, health, and happiness

How much exercise do I really need?

Ideally, you should spend at least 150 minutes a week doing moderate-intensity aerobic activity—such as taking a brisk walk or a gentle bicycle ride. But if you're pressed for time, you might be able to get the same benefit from much shorter but more extreme blasts of activity. Scientists have found that even a few minutes of training at your maximum possible intensity can trigger molecular changes inside muscles that are comparable to several hours of running or bike riding. A team at the Human Performance Institute in Orlando designed a seven-minute circuit workout incorporating 30-second bursts of 12 different exercises—including planks, push-ups, and jumping jacks—that is equivalent to a long run and a weight-lifting session. One warning: Even the creators say that on a scale of discomfort from 1 to 10, the workout makes for a fairly punishing 8.

How do I keep up my motivation?

If you really want to make staying fit easier, don't go it alone. Stanford University psychologist Kelly McGonigal recommends “outsourcing” your willpower and exercising with other people. If you feel tired after a busy day and just want to slump at home, having someone around who says, “Hey, aren't we going for a walk now?” will help you stick to your exercise goals. Also, bribe yourself. “If you hate exercise but truly, truly want the consequences of exercising,” says McGonigal, “you should give yourself permission to do whatever you don't want to let yourself do, like download a whole series of a TV show that you can pop on in front of you on the treadmill.” Creating an exercise schedule in writing also is proven to help.

Why is that?

It establishes your intention in a tangible way, making you more likely to follow through. Scientists at the University of Bath in the U.K. recruited 248 people who wanted to start exercising and

divided them into three groups: One group was asked to track how often they exercised, the second to track and to read about the benefits of exercise, and the third group to do the same but also fill out forms detailing where and when they *would* exercise. Over the next two weeks, just under 40 percent of the first two groups exercised at least once a week, compared with 91 percent of the participants who wrote a workout plan.

What about mental workouts?

Research suggests that meditating for just a few minutes per day can boost your mental acuity. Today, you don't need a guru to learn how to meditate. Mindfulness apps such as Buddhify and Mindfulness Daily will guide you through the process and offer micro-meditation sessions that last as little as three minutes. But the more meditating you can do, the greater the mental lift. Researchers at Carnegie Mellon

University found that 25 minutes of meditation daily made people noticeably more resilient in stressful situations. But if sitting meditation really isn't your thing, then you can learn to be more mindful in everyday life—even while driving or walking, says life coach Shannon Bindler. If you're behind the wheel, just focus on the road and keep the radio off. If you're on foot, Bindler says, “bring your attention to the ground beneath your feet, the sky, and the people/sights around you.” The goal is to be fully present in the moment, as opposed to ruminating about the past or the future.

Are there other ways to curb distraction?

The average American now spends four hours a day staring at a cellphone. If you want to cut that screen time, first disable notifications on your email and every social media app. That way, you won't get annoying pings that make you whip out your phone every five minutes. Just turning down the brightness of the display will make checking your phone feel less compelling. You can also use apps to help wean yourself from apps: Programs such as Freedom and Offtime can be scheduled to block access to social media, games, or other addictive apps at specific times of the day. If you're someone who likes to be on your phone in bed, avoid temptation by putting your device in another room or a storage box overnight. And never take your phone into the bathroom. That'll help you avoid device-meets-toilet calamities and speed up your restroom routine, freeing up more time for short workouts and meditation.

What about healthier eating?

It's easy to raise your fruit-and-vegetable game. If you think that cooking and eating vegetables is labor intensive and boring, try throwing together salads with flavor boosters like zingy homemade dressings, nuts, seeds, and soft herbs. And if you're determined to eat more raw produce, the quickest way to make it more pleasurable is to serve it at room temperature rather than fridge cold. Aim to eat eight portions of fruit and vegetables a day, which along with improving your overall health may also boost your mood. An Australian study that followed the eating habits of 12,000 people found that those who added eight portions of fruit and vegetables a day experienced an increase in life satisfaction equivalent to moving from unemployment to employment.

Supercharge your health with antioxidants.



Living in low-power mode? Recharge your batteries with POM Wonderful 100% Pomegranate Juice. With more antioxidant power on average than red wine or blueberry juice, and four times the potency of green tea, POM has the free radical-fighting juice your body needs.

Noted

■ Forty-one mass killings (defined as an event in which four or more people die, excluding the perpetrator) occurred in the U.S. during 2019—the most of any year since the 1970s. In all, 211 people died, fewer than the 224 tallied during 2017, when a gunman killed 58 people in Las Vegas. Associated Press

■ Border Patrol agents apprehended citizens of more than 100 countries around the world attempting to cross America's southern border in 2018, including almost 9,000 Indians, 1,000 Chinese nationals, 250 Romanians, 153 Pakistanis, 159 Vietnamese, 15 Albanians, three people each from Syria and Taiwan, and two North Koreans. Politico.com

■ Women who have health insurance pay an average out-of-pocket cost of \$4,500 for the delivery of a baby, according to a study of 657,000 women by University of Michigan researchers. Those costs are largely the result of higher deductibles, as employers shift the soaring expense of health care onto employees. TheAtlantic.com

■ Since California passed a law in 2018 requiring that every public company headquartered in the state add at least one woman to its board of directors, 183 new women-held seats have been created. Los Angeles Times

■ Chelsea Clinton has received \$9 million in salary and stock compensation since 2011 for serving on the board of the internet investment company IAC/InterActiveCorp. IAC/InterActiveCorp is controlled by business mogul Barry Diller, a longtime friend of the Clintons. Barrons.com

Anti-Semitism: America's growing crisis

America is in the midst of “the worst wave of sustained anti-Semitic violence in our nation’s history,” said Marc Baker, Jeremy Burton, and Robert Trestan in *The Boston Globe*. Over the past 14 months, there have been dozens of attacks on Jews and numerous threats and incidents of vandalism and arson against synagogues, cemeteries, and homes. This ugly pogrom began when a white supremacist massacred 11 people at a Pittsburgh synagogue in October 2018; six months later, another opened fire at a synagogue in Poway, Calif., killing one and wounding three. On Dec. 10, an anti-Semitic couple killed three people at a kosher grocery in Jersey City. On Dec. 28, a masked man stabbed five people at a rabbi’s house in Rockland County, N.Y. Over Hanukkah, at least 10 anti-Semitic incidents occurred in the New York area alone, with people being punched and attacked simply because they are Jews. “We have seen this during other times and in other countries,” but never before to this extent in America.

The “conventional wisdom” has blamed an invigorated white nationalist movement and its “avatar in the White House,” President Trump, said Batya Ungar-Sargon in *Forward.com*. But



Tears after a rabbi's stabbing in New York

we’ve learned in recent months that many attackers have no specific political ideology; the majority of those who’ve perpetrated the New York assaults are African-American. The blame actually lies with neither the far right nor anti-Zionists on the left but with the rise of extremism in general—and the flourishing of the ancient conspiracy theory that “secretive Jewish power” controls the world. Anti-Semitism has existed for more than 1,000 years, said Benjamin Wittes in *TheAtlantic.com*. People on the Left and Right who blame only one ideology are using anti-Semitism “as a weapon” rather than seriously confronting a growing problem.

We’d better take the problem seriously, said Frida Ghitis in *CNN.com*. Throughout history, anti-Semitism has served as “the canary in the coal mine” for societies that are unraveling. When “the beliefs and ideals” that hold a society together crumble, people in different groups start viewing one another not as countrymen but as rivals, traitors, and “the other.” Jews are usually the first group to be targeted as scapegoats. History tells us that it will be deeply dangerous if anti-Semitism continues to grow in the U.S., “and not just for the Jews.”

Church shooting: The ‘good guy’ theory

A shooting at a Texas church “has revived the debate” over whether more people carrying guns makes society safer or more dangerous, said Dave Montgomery in *The New York Times*. In late December, a drifter with a lengthy criminal record “rose from the pews” of the West Freeway Church of Christ near Fort Worth, pulled a shotgun out from under his coat, and killed two congregants. No fewer than six worshippers “drew their weapons and began moving up the aisles,” as volunteer security guard Jack Wilson—a firearms instructor, gun range owner, and former reserve sheriff’s deputy—took aim and killed the shooter with a single shot to the head. Afterward, gun-rights advocates like Texas State Rep. Jonathan Stickland pointed to the episode as proof that “a good guy with a gun” can prevent a massacre. President Trump hailed the 2017 state law that allows worshippers to carry weapons into churches and synagogues.

Liberals sneer at the “good guy with a gun” narrative, said Brad Polumbo in *Washington Examiner.com*. But this incident should prove, once and for all, that “defensive gun use is not a myth.” Yes, the shooter was able to kill two people before security guard Wilson, 71, shot

him with his Sig Sauer pistol. But this tragedy “could have been much, much worse” if Wilson had not been there. Thank God for the Second Amendment.

Turning Wilson’s heroism into a “PR tool” is deceptive, said Elvia Díaz in *The Arizona Republic*. Wilson was no “ordinary parishioner,” but rather a highly trained firearms professional who kept his cool when the shooting began. He’s exactly the kind of person “you want around with a firearm,” as opposed to a panicky civilian exchanging fire with a madman in a crowded church, movie theater, or school hallway. The shooter, Keith Thomas Kinnunen, 43, was definitely not a person you’d want to have a firearm, said *The Washington Post* in an editorial. His ex-wife described him as “a violent, paranoid person” who claimed he was battling a demon, and a judge once deemed him mentally incompetent to stand trial. Yet in a state with some of the loosest gun laws in the country, he somehow obtained a weapon. “Instead of turning churches and schools into armed camps,” we should focus on “keeping guns away from people who shouldn’t have them.” Strong, national background checks would be a good start.

Golden Globes: Gervais skewers Hollywood

Ricky Gervais “finally said what everyone outside Tinseltown has been thinking,” said **Emily Jashinsky** in *TheFederalist.com*. The subversive British comic’s hosting turn at Sunday’s Golden Globes “deserves to go down in award show history” for his savage takedown of Hollywood’s liberal sanctimony. “You know nothing about the real world,” Gervais told the assembled stars. “So if you win, come up, accept your little award, thank your agent and your god, and f--- off.” As actors gaped in astonishment, Gervais mocked their hypocrisy for lecturing the public while making movies and cable shows for the likes of sexual predator Harvey Weinstein, minimum-wage specialist Amazon, and Apple—“a company that runs sweatshops in China.” For all comics who claim to speak truth to power, “this is how it’s done,” said **Kyle Smith** in the *New York Post*. Gervais hilariously exposed the divide between Hollywood’s preening self-regard and what the rest of the world sees: “a gang of pretentious jerkwads” who mistakenly “think their insights on world affairs matter.”

Gervais’ cynical malevolence was “painful to watch,” said **Sophie Gilbert** in *TheAtlantic.com*. For entertainers to raise their voices at such a dark time for our country was entirely



A modern Greek chorus

appropriate, from Michelle Williams defending abortion rights to Patricia Arquette voicing fear of war with Iran to Russell Crowe linking climate change to the wildfire devastation in his native Australia. Gervais’ “tired agitator shtick” smacked of “nihilism,” said **Lorraine Ali** in the *Los Angeles Times*. With impeachment looming, possible war in the Middle East, and Australia ablaze, “the last thing anyone needed was for the smirking master of ceremonies to reprimand them for having hope, or taunt the room for trying to use their influence to change things for the better.”

In a polarized country, Gervais’ “subversive” assault on Hollywood served as a “political lightning rod,” said **Tiana Lowe** in *Washington Examiner.com*. Conservatives were gleeful. “The Left started hand-wringing.” But Gervais, who has mocked President Trump as “stupid and arrogant,” is actually apolitical: His honest, bracing comedy is part of a venerable tradition, “reminiscent of the ancient Greek chorus or court jester” holding the powerful to account. “Presumably, the most lauded actors in the country have some familiarity with the role of fools challenging kings in *Hamlet* and *King Lear*, even if they had to SparkNotes it.”

Overturing Roe: The GOP sees an opening

“Finally, Republicans are saying what they have always meant about abortion,” said **Lauren Rankin** in *NBCNews.com*. Last week, 205 GOP members of Congress (plus two centrist Democrats) signed an amicus brief urging the Supreme Court to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, dropping their usual doublespeak about their concern for “the health and safety of women.” In the brief, Republicans said *Roe* had created an “unworkable standard” for states crafting their own abortion restrictions. With a firm 5-4 conservative majority, Republicans are seizing on the Supreme Court’s upcoming review of a Louisiana law that would require abortion providers to have hospital admitting privileges—a rule designed to close the state’s abortion clinics. The justices struck down an “indistinguishable” Texas law just four years ago, said **Mark Stern** in *Slate.com*. “In a remarkable act of chutzpah,” Republicans are saying the Texas ruling left states confused about how to define an “undue burden” on abortion rights, so the court should simply overturn its precedents and remove the right to abortion altogether.

“The balance of the Supreme Court has tipped,” said **CC Pecknold** in the *Catholic Herald*, and it’s time to reconsider *Roe* and its companion deci-

sion, *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*. The Republican brief lays out the “disturbingly high number of disciplinary actions” against abortion providers in Louisiana, which is why state legislators cracked down by requiring them to have admitting privileges at nearby hospitals. Yet the law was blocked, thanks to the impossibly vague “undue burden” standard established in *Casey*. The court “has frequently overruled past judgments” found to be legally unworkable, and decades of evidence suggests it’s time to toss *Roe* and *Casey*. Doing so “will not ban abortion,” but it will put that decision before state legislatures and Congress, where it belongs.

In most red states, *Roe* “has long been more concept than reality,” said **Katie McDonough** in *NewRepublic.com*. Although 77 percent of Americans say they support *Roe*, abortion rights have been under assault for decades, as states made it “more expensive, more time consuming, and more humiliating to access.” But pro-choice organizers across the country have built “shadow infrastructures” to enable women in these states to cover the costs of abortion, travel out of state, or obtain medications for “self-managed abortion.” That work will continue “whether or not *Roe* holds.”

Wit & Wisdom

“Good resolutions are simply checks that men draw on a bank where they have no account.”
Oscar Wilde, quoted in the Harrisburg, Pa., Patriot-News

“The presence of those seeking the truth is infinitely to be preferred to the presence of those who think they’ve found it.”
Author Terry Pratchett, quoted in Independent.co.uk

“If you don’t know where you are going, you might wind up someplace else.”
Baseball catcher Yogi Berra, quoted in the Owatonna, Minn., People’s Press

“Do not allow people to dim your shine because they are blinded. Tell them to put some sunglasses on.”
Lady Gaga, quoted in Parade.com

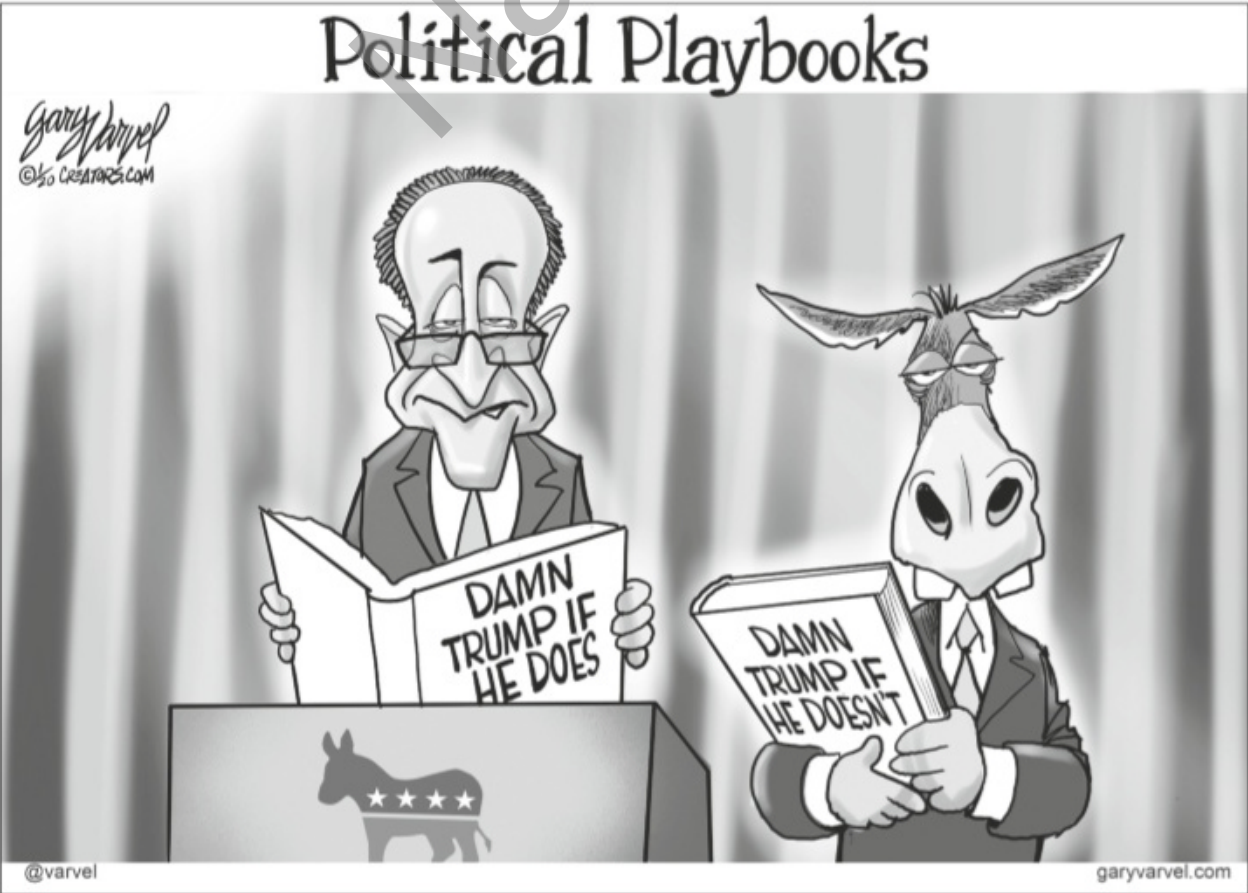
“Ideological certainty easily degenerates into an insistence upon ignorance.”
Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, quoted in The Washington Post

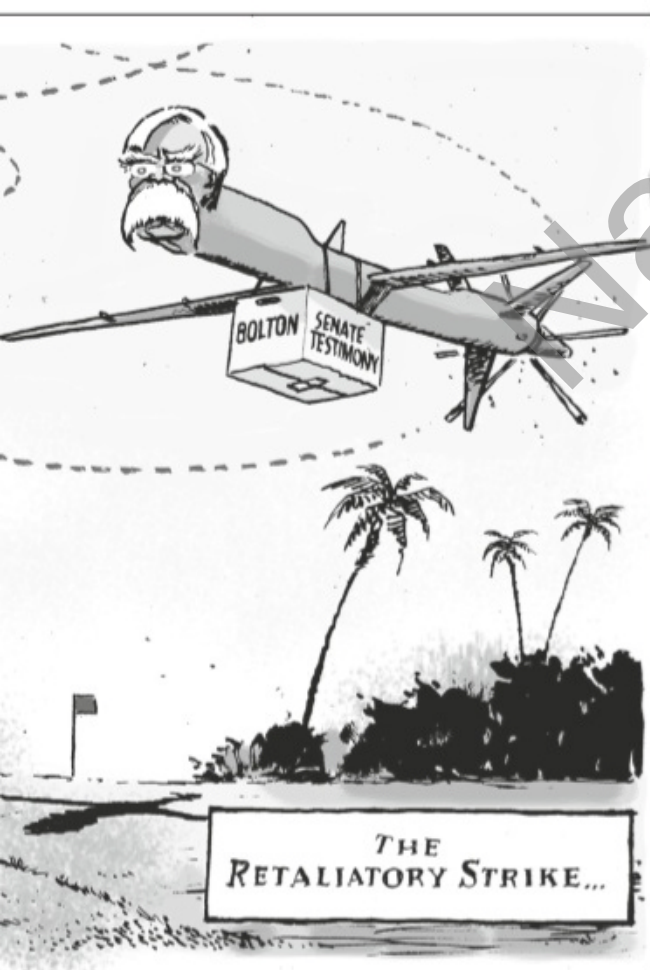
“As nightfall does not come at once, neither does oppression. In both instances, there is a twilight when everything remains seemingly unchanged.”
Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas, quoted in The Atlantic

“The one good thing about national anthems is that we’re already on our feet, and therefore ready to run.”
Author Ocean Vuong, quoted in The New York Times

Poll watch

■ **57%** of Americans now think President Trump committed an impeachable offense in withholding military aid from Ukraine. **52%** say that Trump’s Ukraine actions or his unwillingness to cooperate with the impeachment inquiry justify removing him from office. **57%** of Americans think the upcoming Senate trial should include new witnesses, including **65%** of Democrats and **48%** of Republicans. FiveThirtyEight/Ipsos





Data: Can we ever be anonymous again?

“Millions of Americans are carrying spies in their pockets during their day and leaving them beside their beds at night,” said **Stuart Thompson** and **Charlie Warzel** in *The New York Times*. We obtained a gigantic file from just one of the dozens of data firms in existence, and it held “more than 50 billion location pings from the phones of more than 12 million Americans” from a period of several months in 2016 and 2017. And while these tracking companies typically justify their business by saying that “people consent to be tracked, the data is anonymous, and the data is secure,” those claims don’t hold up. “In most cases, ascertaining a home location and an office location was enough to identify a person.” We tracked a Microsoft employee who changed his routine commute one day to visit the headquarters of Amazon. “The following month, he started a new job at Amazon.” All of this collection is perfectly legal—and profitable. Many buyers “have little to do with consumer advertising, including financial institutions, geospatial analysis companies, and real estate investment firms.” Even scarier? “It took only minutes” for us to track the whereabouts of President Trump, thanks to location pings from the smartphone of a Secret Service agent.

“Only the paranoid survive,” said **Kara Swisher**, also in the *Times*, which is why I recently switched “all of the location-



Real names are easily found via ‘anonymous’ data.

the new rules nationwide. Google has already begun adjusting its protocols for data, but Facebook is “arguing that it does not need to change anything” because its collection doesn’t constitute “selling” under state law.

In reality, transparency goes “only so far,” said **Geoffrey Fowler** in *The Washington Post*. “My inbox is already flooded with updated privacy policies and data disclosures,” thanks to the CCPA, and I can’t handle all of it. One bright sign: The next year could bring a new wave of data-privacy apps “joining the likes of password managers and security-focused Wi-Fi routers.” These apps, for example Jumbo, log into your platforms and “spruce up your privacy on your behalf,” quickly identifying “a half-dozen privacy settings for Facebook and Google that even I missed.”

Innovation of the week

Volkswagen has created a self-driving robot that can autonomously recharge your car in a parking garage, said **Jon Fingas** in *Engadget.com*.



As electric vehicles proliferate, in time it “won’t be realistic to outfit every parking spot with a dedicated” charging station in places such as a parking facility. Volkswagen’s solution is a bot that you can call over with a smartphone app to give your EV a 50-kilowatt boost. Once it comes to your car, the robot plugs your car in and handles the whole process. When the EV is recharged, the robot automatically returns to a base station. The bots are equipped with “cameras, laser scanners, and ultrasonic sensors” to help them move freely throughout the garage and find each car’s charging port without any human interaction required.

Bytes: What’s new in tech

A phone game for the foolhardy

“A popular mobile game that randomly selects photos from players’ cameras is leading to some cringeworthy moments for teens and privacy panics for parents,” said **Julie Jargon** in *The Wall Street Journal*. The free Photo Roulette app allows you to invite up to 49 friends to join the game, “and players grant the app access to their phones’ photo albums.” The app then selects a photo from one phone at random, and “other players have to guess who it came from.” Many kids see it as a “fun game—until a sensitive photo pops up.” **Cadence Messier**, for instance, thought she had deleted her most embarrassing photos, until “the app displayed a photo of her Social Security number.” Her mom had once texted a photo of it, and she “hadn’t noticed it among her 10,000-plus shots.”

The failures of classroom tech

Technology in the classroom seems to provide little benefit to students, said **Natalie Wexler** in the *MIT Technology Review*—in fact, “much of the data shows a negative impact at a range of grade levels.” An international study of millions of students found those who use laptops at school “do a lot worse in most learning outcomes,” while eighth-graders who took Alge-

bra I online “did much worse than those who took the course in person.” Fourth-graders who used tablets in the classroom scored a full grade lower in reading than those who did not. Schools that serve disadvantaged students have turned to tech to close the education gap. Now “vulnerable students are spending more time on digital devices than their more privileged counterparts,” with especially adverse effects for students who are already behind.

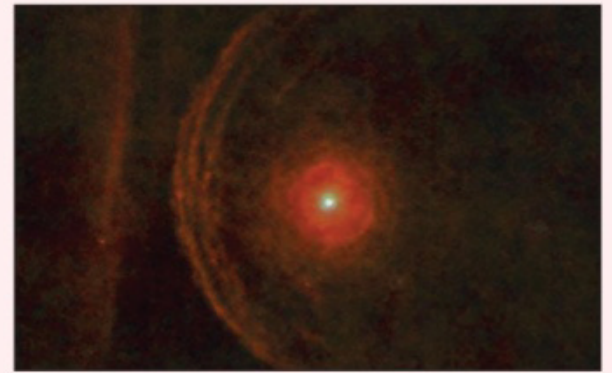
Silicon Valley’s private army

After a shooting at YouTube in 2018, more Big Tech firms have turned to military vets to provide security, said **Matt Gallagher** in *Esquire*. The incident at YouTube, involving an active shooter who injured four workers, “accelerated” the “professionalization—some would call it the militarization—of the security business” in Silicon Valley. One San Francisco-based risk-management firm providing “protection for hire” is more than 90 percent ex-military personnel. The contractors in their crisp button-down shirts stick out on casual-dress tech campuses. But they adopt the local customs to “win hearts and minds,” as they might in a war zone. “I had to tone down the alpha-male stuff when I got here,” says one former infantryman.

Is Betelgeuse about to go supernova?

One of the brightest stars is rapidly dimming—a possible sign it will soon explode into a supernova, producing a dazzling light show that would dominate the night sky. Betelgeuse—the red star that forms the right shoulder of the constellation Orion—sits some 650 light-years from Earth and is some 15 times more massive than our sun. Such supergiants burn out fast: Betelgeuse is only about 8 million years old and dying, while the sun is 5 billion years old and, cosmically speaking, considered middle-aged. Usually the ninth-most luminous star in the sky, Betelgeuse started to fade

in October and by mid-December had dropped out of the top 20 brightest stars, reports *The Washington Post*. That rapid change suggests Betelgeuse is entering its final life stage. As a star sputters out, it fuses helium atoms into ever-heavier elements, until eventually all the material in its core becomes iron. At that point, the star collapses under the force of its own gravity, and then explodes into a supernova. When Betelgeuse eventually blows, the star will be as bright as the moon for several weeks, glowing so fiercely that it will be visible by day and cast shadows at night. “No one would be able to



The red supergiant is dimming rapidly.

miss it when they looked up,” says Emily Levesque, an astronomer at the University of Washington. Don’t hold your breath, though—the supernova could occur any time in the next 100,000 years.



A face from ancient gum

Scientists have re-created the face of an ancient hunter-gatherer using DNA extracted from a piece of “chewing gum” that was spat out some 5,600 years ago. The lump of chewed birch tar



The birch tar and its chewer

was found at a site in southern Denmark, alongside pieces of wood and wild animal bones. Made by heating birch tree bark, the tar has been employed as an adhesive for hundreds of thousands of years. Neolithic humans used the sticky substance to glue arrowheads to arrow shafts and repair stone tools. Many pieces of tar found at archaeological sites contain tooth marks, suggesting the gum—which has antiseptic properties—was also used to treat tooth pain. From the Danish sample, researchers were able to re-create the entire genomic sequence of the chewer: a woman who had dark skin, dark hair, and blue eyes. It is the first time that scientists have extracted an entire human genome from anything other than human bones. “There are periods where we don’t have any bones, but birch pitch survives very well,” study co-author Theis Jensen tells *The Guardian* (U.K.). “It’s very intimate. You get so much information.”

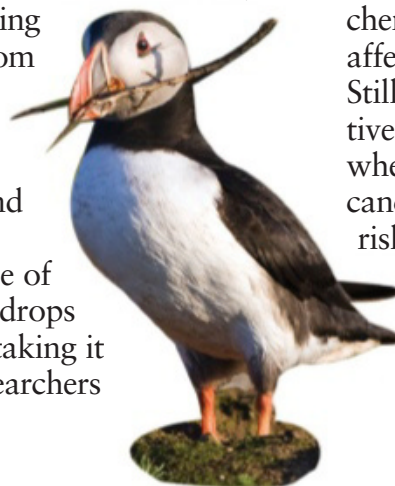
Permafrost in meltdown

The permafrost that covers much of the world’s frozen far north is thawing so rapidly and releasing so much carbon into the atmosphere that the Arctic may now be a

major contributor to climate change. That is the conclusion of the latest annual Arctic Report Card from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, reports *Vox.com*. Permafrost is a layer of frozen soil that encompasses about 25 percent of the land in the Northern Hemisphere. It acts as a massive freezer, locking away up to 1,760 billion tons of organic carbon from dead plants and animals. But as temperatures rise in the Arctic—the past six years were the warmest recorded in the region—long-dormant microbes in the icy ground are waking up and converting that organic material into planet-warming carbon dioxide and methane. NOAA estimates that melting permafrost now releases up to 2.2 billion net tons of carbon into the atmosphere each year—the equivalent of Russia’s annual emissions. Those emissions fuel climate change, which melts more permafrost, which in turn generates more warming. “The accelerating feedback from changing permafrost ecosystems to climate change,” the report states, “may already be underway.”

Puffins that use tools

Puffins have been spotted scratching themselves with sticks—the first time wild seabirds have been observed using tools. Researchers saw two Atlantic puffins, one in Wales and one on an Icelandic island, using sticks as grooming devices. In footage from Iceland, a puffin waddles toward the camera, grabs a stick with its beak, and scratches itself under its chest with the piece of wood. The bird then drops the stick rather than taking it home to its nest. Researchers



say the puffin was likely trying to knock off ticks, which plague seabird populations. Other birds—including crows and parrots—have been spotted using tools, but never for anything other than acquiring hard-to-reach food. Only primates and elephants are known to use tools for other tasks. Study author Annette Fayet says her findings suggest we may have underestimated birds’ cognitive abilities. “Many more species may also be using tools,” she tells *CNN.com*, “but we simply haven’t observed them yet.”

Health scare of the week Hair dye and breast cancer

Women who use permanent hair dye and chemical hair straighteners have a higher risk of developing breast cancer, according to a new study by the National Institutes of Health. After examining medical data and lifestyle surveys from 46,709 women ages 35 to 74, researchers found that white women who had used permanent hair dye in the previous year were 7 percent more likely to get breast cancer in the eight-year follow-up period. For black women, the increased risk was 45 percent. Use of chemical hair straighteners was linked to an 18 percent higher breast cancer risk in both black and white women. Researchers don’t know which of the 5,000 chemicals found in hair products might be of concern, or why there is such a racial disparity. It could be that products designed for black women contain more of the cancer-causing chemicals, or that differences in hair texture affect the amounts of dye that are applied. Still, the risk from these products is relatively low—scientists typically worry only when environmental exposures increase cancer risk by 100 percent or more. “These risks are potentially important,” co-author Alexandra White tells *The New York Times*, “but we know that a lot of different factors contribute to a woman’s risk of breast cancer.”

Review of reviews: Books

Book of the week

The Power of Bad: How the Negativity Effect Rules Us and How We Can Rule It

by John Tierney and Roy F. Baumeister
(Penguin, \$28)

“It’s not just in your head,” said Nick Gillespie in *Reason.com*. Negative thoughts are more powerful than their opposite for just about everyone: “We remember trauma more than joy, we’re brought down by criticism more than we’re elevated by praise, and we pay more attention to bad news than good.” But that doesn’t mean we have to surrender to perpetual gloom. In their new book, science journalist John Tierney and social psychology professor Roy Baumeister offer helpful tips on overriding our so-called negativity bias—a relatively recent discovery in psychology—to cultivate a healthier, more productive, and more realistic outlook.

“Tierney and Baumeister argue their case forcefully and well,” said Marcus Berkman in the *Daily Mail* (U.K.). A



Must worry outweigh hope?

negativity bias, they acknowledge, worked for our hunter-gatherer ancestors: Those who feared poisonous berries and deadly predators were more likely to survive than their more carefree brethren. These days, though, we face fewer threats to survival, and our instinctive wariness can be counterproductive, even fatal. In the aftermath of 9/11, for example, fear of flying prompted millions of Americans to travel to distant destinations by highways instead—and an estimated 1,600 more people died in the resulting car crashes. But an awareness of negativity bias can help, said Josh St. Clair in *MensHealth.com*. The authors suggest

reinforcing happy moments by sharing successes with others and allowing yourself to indulge in nostalgic memories. And because a negative experience is more than three times as powerful as a positive experience, they say, aim to praise a child or spouse or friend four times more often than you criticize. They even suggest we quadruple our intake of positive news to avoid being misled by the media’s appetite for the bad.

Given my hatred of false cheer, “clearly I need to cultivate a positivity bias,” said Stuart Jeffries in *TheGuardian.com*. But Tierney and Baumeister go too far. They “accentuate the positive to the point of complacency,” insisting that we are living in a golden global age and that it can get even better if we simply recognize and savor our good fortune: World poverty is falling, so why worry about the hungry? ISIS killed fewer Westerners than bathtub injuries, so why worry about the fallout from starting a war in the Middle East? “What Tierney and Baumeister don’t recognize is there is not just a power of bad, but a curse of good, too.” In fact, “that’s the sequel right there”—just don’t expect these “professional Pollyannas” to be the ones who write it.

Novel of the week

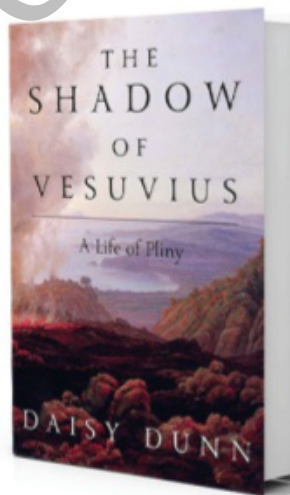
Dead Astronauts

by Jeff VanderMeer
(MCD/FSG, \$27)

Jeff VanderMeer’s latest is “a kaleidoscopic and fractured mosaic,” said Arkady Martine in *NPR.org*. Set in the same bio-hacked dystopia he created for 2017’s *Borne*, the new novel follows a trio of unusual heroes who inhabit “a dissolving world where narrative and language are as subject to corruption as modified flesh.” A clairvoyant space traveler and her shapeshifting companions—one is part salamander and the other is part moss—seek to destroy the corrupt biotech company that created them, while the book’s shifting time frames and points of view generate “compulsively absorbing confusion.” The final two-thirds of the novel greatly expands the cast of mostly nonhuman, genetically altered narrators, and “the conceit can be trying,” said Clark Collis in *Entertainment Weekly*. But VanderMeer remains thrillingly imaginative as he explores the fallout of fiddling with nature. In the end, “the vivid and at times genuinely moving *Dead Astronauts* ranks as a successful experiment—definitely more successful than much of the deranged biological tinkering it depicts.”

The Shadow of Vesuvius: A Life of Pliny

by Daisy Dunn (Liveright, \$30)



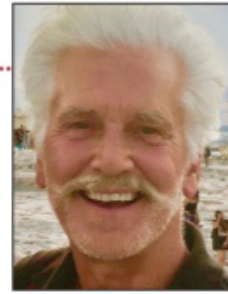
“Doing your homework,” said Harry Sidebottom in *The Telegraph* (U.K.), “can save your life.” As Daisy Dunn’s “enthraling” joint portrait of Pliny the Elder and Pliny the Younger reminds us, the fates of the two chroniclers of ancient Rome diverged in A.D. 79 on the day when the uncle invited his nephew to join him on a rescue mission and the teenager chose to turn back to a history text while his mentor died in the ash raining down from Mount Vesuvius. Beyond their roles in that drama, though, “neither Pliny is particularly promising material for a biography.” The uncle rarely wrote about himself, and the nephew cared too much about projecting his own importance. But Dunn, a British classicist, “has a great eye for a story, and writes wonderfully.” She uses her subjects to bring Rome, at its apex, back to life.

We’re lucky we had the pair, said James Romm in *The Wall Street Journal*. Pliny the Elder, a polymath, wrote the first surviving encyclopedia, a 37-volume “cornucopia of marvels” that liberally mixed lore with scientific observation. The book is the source of the phrase “in a nutshell” and of the idea that elephants are afraid of mice, and it remains a monument to the boundless curiosity of its tireless author. His nephew, the book’s main protagonist, is less appealing. A lawyer, Pliny the Younger rose to a position of authority by allying himself with the emperor Domitian, a cruel tyrant. Still, hundreds of his letters survive, and “the world we see through Pliny’s letters is fascinating.” The empire in his time was a place where sages dedicated to justice and reason often battled for the hearts of absolutist rulers, and lost.

As we get to know Pliny Jr., “he seems almost familiar, in a way the elder Pliny could never be,” said Charles McGrath in *The New York Times*. He was a plodder and a worrier, aspiring to significance but lacking the talent and prone to squandering time on managing his finances and upgrading his home. Though he was at times decent and generous, he was ultimately merely human, and “even his failures are sort of endearing.”

Best books...chosen by Chip Walter

Chip Walter, a former CNN bureau chief, is a veteran science journalist and TV documentary producer. *Immortality, Inc.*, his fifth book, visits with the scientists and Silicon Valley entrepreneurs who are working to dramatically increase human longevity.



The Dragons of Eden by Carl Sagan (1977). Sagan won a Pulitzer Prize for this book about the evolution of human intelligence. He is the master of the “aha” moment, and his profound and refreshing explorations of the brain, sleep, genetics, and concepts like his “Cosmic Calendar” plowed the road for a generation of science writers. A must-read.

The Blind Watchmaker by Richard Dawkins (1986). This book reveals the power behind the DNA that long ago came into existence and makes all life, including us, possible. Dawkins encapsulates the complex forces that have shaped our evolution with such lucidity of mind and phrase that you never feel overwhelmed.

The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat by Oliver Sacks (1985). Reading a book by Sacks is like reading a fine murder mystery, except his uncommonly engaging stories unmask the riddles of the human mind. He recounts the journeys of his patients with such warmth and insight that you fall in love with every one of them.

The Medusa and the Snail by Lewis Thomas

(1979). This essay collection won Thomas his second National Book Award and deservedly so. No one can tell you more about human behavior by way of cells and ants, mitochondria and symbiosis. The wit and beauty of his passages somehow manage to be simultaneously light, profound, engaging, and startling.

The Unexpected Universe by Loren Eiseley (1969). Ray Bradbury described Eiseley as “every writer’s writer and every human’s human.” This slim volume threads the origins of our humanity into essays that are almost mythic in their power. They smolder and then ignite your mind, often forcing you to put down what you’re reading, floored.

Microcosmos by Lynn Margulis and Dorion Sagan (1986). *Microcosmos* tells the little-known story of the first 2.5 billion years of life on Earth, when only single-celled organisms inhabited the planet. It was during that long epoch that nature did all the hard work that led to us. In the end, we see that every living thing on the planet is one great and vibrant organism, drawn together more in cooperation than competition.

Author of the week

E.J. Koh

E.J. Koh can bridge any divide, said Rich Smith in *TheStranger.com*. The San Jose native’s remarkable new memoir, *The Magical Language of Others*, begins with a traumatic separation: When Koh was 15, she and her 19-year-old brother were installed in a house of their own when her father was offered a lucrative job and both parents returned to South Korea for seven years. “Legally, maybe, that was OK,” she says. “But it was not OK.” Instead of holding on to the pain caused by her parents’ decision, though, Koh chose to use the book to reach back into the history of the family—and of Korea itself—to understand and even love her mother’s choice in particular. Fortunately for readers, Koh, who is now a 31-year-old poet and translator, had a box full of the weekly letters her mother sent during that long separation.

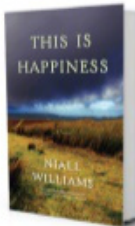


The letters, written mostly in a simplified Korean so that Koh might understand them, add fascinating layers to the story, said Anita Felicelli in the *San Francisco Chronicle*. Amid the mom jokes, the advice, and the expressions of love and regret, Koh’s mother mixed in garbled English, and the translations we get add a fairy-tale dimension to Koh’s teenage trauma and the traumas of war suffered by the women in the family who preceded her. Koh’s goal with the book is to avoid passing on her heartbreak to future generations. Now that she has succeeded, she can focus on her next project—an attempt to write a love letter to each of 1,000 strangers who respond online to her offer. “I really want everyone else to feel less alone,” she says. “And I feel I have the ability to give myself in this way.”

Also of interest...in powerful emotions

This Is Happiness

by Niall Williams (Bloomsbury, \$28)



Niall Williams’ “humane and poetic” worldview deserves a wider audience, said Isabel Berwick in the *Financial Times*. The Irish writer’s 10th novel is set in a yet-to-be-electrified County Clare village in 1958, as remembered by a man who spent a summer there as a grieving 17-year-old. The protagonist witnesses the transformation of tiny, rainy Faha and undergoes one of his own. Williams’ portrayal of both is life-affirming—and written in a way that “makes the reader want to underline something on every page.”

The Crying Book

by Heather Christle (Catapult, \$17)



Poet Heather Christle is no stranger to tears, said Alexis Burling in the *San Francisco Chronicle*. But though her first nonfiction book includes powerful personal passages, it is also a wide-ranging study of crying that rewards readers with “a slew of interesting facts and chin-stroking insights.” Christle’s scattershot approach sometimes leaves important ideas underdeveloped, but this slim book is “too unique and inspired to be dismissed.” It “gets at the heart of why sadness arrives and how it affects us.”

The Heart Is a Full-Wild Beast

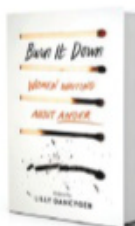
by John L’Heureux (A Public Space, \$28)



“Most contemporary fiction travels a safe, well-trod path from crisis to redemption,” said Sam Sacks in *The Wall Street Journal*. But in the “savagely powerful” short stories of one-time priest John L’Heureux, who died last year at 84, grace seldom comes in an easy-open package. An accidentally pregnant comedian hears the fetus singing; a crooked cop is haunted by a priest he killed. Ironies run deep here, and “the universality of sin and guilt is the source of the jagged laughter that blasts through the pages.”

Burn It Down

edited by Lilly Dancyger (Seal, \$27)



“There are an estimated 3.8 billion women in the world, and I’d wager that nearly all have disquieting stories to tell,” said Bean Gilsdorf in the *Los Angeles Review of Books*. This collection of essays on women’s anger features 22 women’s voices, and they’re a diverse, insightful bunch. Leslie Jamison, Melissa Febos, and others reflect on how women’s anger is stifled and misinterpreted. Still, the book says too little about how women might “burn it down”—meaning the set of social rules that fuel our rage.

26 ARTS Review of reviews: Art & Podcasts

Exhibit of the week Marcel Duchamp: The Barbara and Aaron Levine Collection

Hirshhorn Museum, Washington, D.C., through Oct. 15

Marcel Duchamp was one of a kind, said **Philip Kennicott** in *The Washington Post*. “The reigning god of contemporary art,” the French iconoclast (1887–1968) surpasses even Pablo Picasso in his lasting influence, and as of now, Washington, D.C., has become one of the best places in the world to see his various innovations in one museum visit. A new gift from two local collectors has graced the Hirshhorn with three dozen works by Duchamp that create a breviary of his “magically wayward” career. Though the Philadelphia Museum of Art still owns the essential Duchamp collection, the Hirshhorn, too, can now display how the onetime painter overturned received ideas and invented what we now know as conceptual art—including all the sorry imitations of Duchamp’s landmark innovations. Whether he was putting a urinal in a gallery or a mustache on the *Mona Lisa*, “playful subversion” was the fundamental strategy of all his work. “It was essentially Socratic, an art made of questions that undermined comfortable truths.”



Duchamp's Boîte-en-valise (1963)

The modernist establishment rebuffed Duchamp before he rejected it, said **Willona Sloan** in *DCist.com*. In 1912, the young painter submitted *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2* to the Salon des Indépendants in Paris and took the canvas home when other members—all devotees of cubism—deemed its stop-motion image too reminiscent of futurism, a rival movement. Five years later, another public snub established his legend. This time, he submitted a urinal to be hung in a nonjuried New York exhibition—only to see the work, which he labeled *Fountain*, hidden behind

a partition. But Duchamp’s so-called readymades, and his idea that an object is art when an artist says it is, proved too revolutionary to be forgotten. As his star rose, his redefinitions of art became even more mind-bending, said **Brendan Smith** in *The Washington Diplomat*. In his last decade, Duchamp cranked out reproductions of his 1910s readymades—which is why the Hirshhorn now displays a 1964 version of a 1917 hat rack. As Duchamp told an interviewer in 1966, “I cannot explain everything I do.”

“The preponderance of copies and serial editions also creates a conceptual distance that is woven through the entire show,” said **Kerr Houston** in *BmoreArt.com*. Duchamp, who twice was exiled by wars, appears to have wanted that effect. Consider 1963’s *Boîte-en-valise*, a suitcase whose multiple compartments display tiny images and reproductions of his signature works. The suitcase reads as an attempt at autobiography that acknowledges the impossibility of re-creating the original experiences that fill a fleeting life. “Once we realize that, the entire show seems to snap into focus.” Though art won’t stop the ticking clock for any of us, “a suitcase filled with delicate miniatures can at least remind us what we have to lose.”

New and notable podcasts

Detective Trapp

(Wondery)

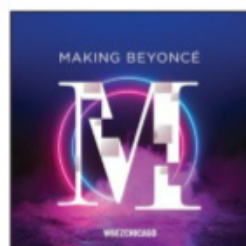


“True-crime stories are always thrilling—in a morbid and sometimes worrisome way,” said **Brenna Ehrlich** in *RollingStone.com*. But it would be hard not to root for the woman at

the center of this five-episode series by the creator of the 2017 podcast turned Netflix series *Dirty John*. Detective Julissa Trapp, granted an “intensely human portrait” by *Los Angeles Times* reporter Christopher Goffard, is a dogged first-generation Mexican-American officer who pursues a case involving murdered sex workers in Santa Ana, Calif. The homicide squad initially neglected the women’s disappearances. But following the discovery of human remains in a trash-sorting plant in 2014, Trapp took on the case. “While the nuts-and-bolts police work here is intriguing,” said **Amy Wilkinson** in *NYMag.com*, far more compelling is Trapp, a woman who joined the force at 21 and who for this case disguised herself as a sex worker to obtain crucial information. “It may not be long before TV producers come calling once again.”

Making Beyoncé

(WBEZ)



Queen Bey didn’t always inhabit the pop-culture stratosphere, said **Wil Williams** in *AVClub.com*. The creators of 2018’s *Making Obama* bring “measured journalistic sensibilities” to Beyoncé’s less-than-godlike origin story. Though the Houston native’s talent made itself known almost from toddlerhood, the precursor to Destiny’s Child, a preteen group called Girls Tyme, failed to attract interest from record producers, lost *Star Search* in 1993, and cycled through 30 girls. “You could complain that the series errs toward hagiography,” said **Fiona Sturges** in the *Financial Times*. “There is, however, much reading between the lines to be done.” The testimony that host Jill Hopkins elicits from family, managers, and fellow performers tells a story of a childhood spent in endless rehearsal under the close watch of a perfectionist father. We’re invited to draw our own conclusions, and not all of them are rosy. “As an oral history of the creation of a pop phenomenon, *Making Beyoncé* is thorough, illuminating, and often deeply alarming.”

Moonface

(James Kim)



“We need more podcasts like this one, born out of a fiercely singular vision,” said **Jack Conway** in *PodcastReview.org*. A semi-autobiographical fiction series self-produced by Gimlet Media’s James Kim, it follows a 20-something Korean-American in suburban Los Angeles who is struggling to find creative fulfillment and the words to tell his mother that he is gay. The latter challenge is doubly difficult for Paul, played by Joel Kim Booster. Each day, Paul’s mother communicates with him in broken English, and he with her in the few Korean words he knows. The podcast deals with sex boldly at times, but listeners will connect with Paul’s vulnerability from the start, said **Neena Pathak** in *The New York Times*. Scenes backgrounded by a “loud, steady club beat” amplify his confusion and yearning. And the halting mother-son conversations “highlight a truth that many children of immigrants know too well—that while we’ll never fully understand or be understood, it can still be worth it to try.”

1917

Directed by Sam Mendes
(R)



Two soldiers undertake an impossible mission.

Though its subject is war and death, Sam Mendes' Golden Globe-winning new film feels "wholly alive," said **Stephanie Zacharek** in *Time.com*. This "extraordinary" World War I drama follows two young British soldiers—played by relative unknowns George MacKay and Dean-Charles Chapman—who must cross enemy lines to deliver a message to 1,600 compatriots who are about to walk into a German ambush. The pair brave bullets, bombs, and countless encounters with corpses, "yet Mendes' aim isn't to serve up relentless punishments for two hours." Instead, his focus is on the vitality and courage of his two chance heroes, and



MacKay in the trenches

MacKay's boyish face "haunts you after the screen dims." The movie was edited to play like one uninterrupted shot, and that stunt, unfortunately, "redirects attention from the story to the technique," said **Kyle Smith** in *NationalReview.com*. Worse, as Mendes throws every conceivable obstacle at his protagonists, his otherwise riveting drama

"comes to seem unforgivably contrived." More like stylized but effective, said **Dana Stevens** in *Slate.com*. "Ten or 15 minutes in, I had already forgotten about the one-take concept in my fear and concern for these young men." Days later, "I can't shake the memory of MacKay's shell-shocked face."

Just Mercy

Directed by Destin Daniel Cretton
(PG-13)



A real-life Atticus Finch fights for justice.

"Just Mercy will set your sense of injustice ablaze," said **Alissa Wilkinson** in *Vox.com*. Based on a memoir of the same name, the "workmanlike" but "vital" legal procedural tells the story of how civil rights lawyer Bryan Stevenson fought to save an innocent black man from the electric chair. Jamie Foxx, in a supporting role that could land an Oscar nomination, plays Walter McMillian—a Monroeville, Ala., small businessman who in the late 1980s was held on death row before he was even tried—then convicted of murder based on fabricated testimony. Though the story easily could have been sensationalized, *Just Mercy* "feels honest



Jordan and Foxx: Two against the world

and sober," said **Bilge Ebiri** in *NYMag.com*. Michael B. Jordan is "wonderfully unpredictable" as a nervous Harvard law grad who—when he's not being harassed by racist townsfolk—is repeatedly told that *To Kill a Mockingbird* author Harper Lee came from Monroeville. The same people neglect to mention that their home was once a slav-

ery hub, said **Sara Stewart** in the *New York Post*. "That disconnect gets at the heart of *Just Mercy*, and Foxx's devastating portrayal of McMillian, so steeped in lifelong inequality that he barely looks surprised when he's mistakenly and roughly arrested, is guaranteed to stick with you."

Clemency

Directed by Chinonye Chukwu
(R)



A warden dreads her prison's next execution.

Unlike *Just Mercy*, this death row drama doesn't aim for uplift, said **Justin Chang** in the *Los Angeles Times*. **Alfre Woodard** delivers "one of the year's great performances" playing a prison warden who has grown uneasy with her role as an executioner. After a lethal injection goes badly wrong, her composure crumbles. "*Clemency* deserves a wider audience than it's likely to find: It's a sterling piece of American realism, powered by the transfixing spectacle of a great actor at the peak of her powers." **Aldis Hodge** plays the prisoner



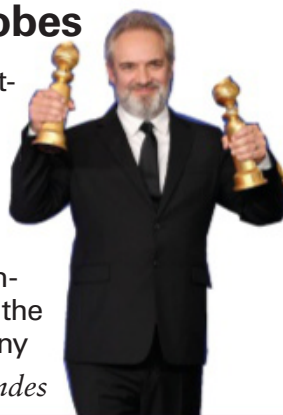
Woodard on the lethal injection table

who'll die next, and he's "the beating heart of the movie, by turns hopeful and comatose, furious and tender," said **Leah Greenblatt** in *EW.com*. By leaving unclear the character's culpability, *Clemency* "does what few other movies about death row have, handling an infinitely complicated subject in terms that are neither moralizing nor melodramatic." At times the dialogue is "too on the nose," but Woodard—wow, said **Manohla Dargis** in *The New York Times*. "It takes you a while before you grasp how deep she's gone."

Winners and losers at the Golden Globes

If there was a loser at this year's Golden Globes, it was Netflix, said **David Sims** in *TheAtlantic.com*. The streamer's expected Oscar contenders—*The Irishman* and *Marriage Story*—were pushed aside by Quentin Tarantino's ode to 1969 Hollywood and Sam Mendes' *1917*. Sure, Globes night has never been a perfect predictor of Oscar results. And Martin Scorsese's mob epic and Noah Baumbach's chamber drama could bounce back. Still, perhaps the film industry isn't yet ready to cede its highest honors to any late-to-the-party home-viewing service.

Mendes



Best picture, drama: *1917*

Best picture, musical or comedy:

Once Upon a Time...in Hollywood

Best director: Sam Mendes, *1917*

Best actress, drama: Renée Zellweger, *Judy*

Best actress, comedy or musical: Awkwafina, *The Farewell*

Best actor, drama: Joaquin Phoenix, *Joker*

Best actor, musical or comedy: Taron Egerton, *Rocketman*

Best TV series, drama: *Succession*

Best TV series, musical or comedy: *Fleabag*

Best TV limited series: *Chernobyl*

Movies on TV

Monday, Jan. 13

The Search

Shot in war-ravaged Germany just after World War II, this moving drama tells parallel stories of a mother and young son, both Auschwitz survivors, who hope to reunite. With Montgomery Clift as a helpful G.I. (1948) 8 p.m., TCM

Tuesday, Jan. 14

Saturday Night Fever

John Travolta became a superstar playing a working-class Brooklynite who finds fleeting glory on the lit floor of a local discotheque. (1977) 3:50 p.m. Starz Encore

Wednesday, Jan. 15

Spy

Melissa McCarthy and *Bridesmaids* director Paul Feig reteam for this romp about a CIA desk jockey who becomes a super agent. (2015) 7:25 p.m., FXM

Thursday, Jan. 16

Steve Jobs

Michael Fassbender and Kate Winslet carry a potent biopic about the Apple co-founder from Danny Boyle and screenwriter Aaron Sorkin. (2015) Available for streaming on Netflix

Friday, Jan. 17

Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?

Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton tear up the screen in Mike Nichols' powerful adaptation of Edward Albee's play about a husband and wife who thrive on verbal warfare. (1966) 9:45 p.m., TCM

Saturday, Jan. 18

The Avengers

Marvel's best and brightest superheroes assemble to take on Thor's brother, Loki, in the first blockbuster Avengers team-up. (2012) 10:05 p.m., Epix

Sunday, Jan. 19

The King's Speech

A wartime British monarch overcomes his stammer with the aid of a maverick therapist in a Best Picture winner featuring Colin Firth and Geoffrey Rush. (2010) 7 p.m., the Movie Channel

The Week's guide to what's worth watching

This Is Us

Maybe only a series with a shifting time frame could build in so many cliffhangers. The season-ending Thanksgiving episode of NBC's acclaimed hit drama alerted fans to a near future in which the Pearson family matriarch is confronting a form of dementia, brothers Randall and Kevin have stopped talking, and Kevin is expecting a first child with a woman yet to be identified. Mandy Moore, Emmy winner Sterling K. Brown, and the rest of the cast return as singer John Legend takes on a guest-starring role. Tuesday, Jan. 14, at 9 p.m., NBC

Little America

Think of this new show as *Dreamers: The Series*. Each of its eight funny and moving episodes dramatizes the story of a contemporary American immigrant, from a 12-year-old who ran his family's motel when his parents were deported back to India to a Nigerian grad student in Oklahoma who fashions himself a cowboy. All the stories first appeared in *Epic*, an online magazine. Available for streaming Friday, Jan. 17, Apple TV

Sex Education

Would you take sex advice from a socially awkward teenage virgin? Otis Milburn's classmates did during the first season of this deft teen dramedy series about the son of a famous sex therapist who puts his mom's teachings to work. Played by the immensely likable Asa Butterfield, Otis will be learning in Season 2 how to be responsibly sexually active himself, while his queer best friend and others lean on him while venturing into new relationships. With Ncuti Gatwa and Emma Mackey. Available for streaming Friday, Jan. 17, Netflix

AJ and the Queen

RuPaul has reinvented himself again. Starring for the first time in a scripted comedy series, the 59-year-old recent *Vanity Fair* cover model plays Ruby Red, a drag performer who after a hard knock is trying to rebound with a cross-country nightclub tour. Ruby soon discovers that her RV has picked up a 10-year-old stowaway—which means the kid is just going to have to get used to being surrounded by sequins, wigs, and various



RuPaul expands the brand in *AJ and the Queen*.

of Ruby's friends who favor the same. Currently streaming on Netflix

The Outsider

The latest Stephen King adaptation begins as a crime procedural when a small-town teacher is arrested for the murder of an 11-year-old. But evidence that puts the suspect miles from the crime leaves an unlikely pair of investigators, played by Ben Mendelsohn and Cynthia Erivo, wondering if the evil at play surpasses understanding. Episode 3 pulls Erivo into the story, steered by a creative dream team of actor-director Jason Bateman and writers Richard Price and Dennis Lehane. Sunday, Jan. 19, at 9 p.m., HBO

Other highlights**College Football's Championship Game**

The undefeated Tigers of Clemson meet the undefeated Tigers of LSU to determine which school and which great young quarterback will take the trophy. Monday, Jan. 13, 8 p.m., ESPN

Seventh Democratic Presidential Debate

The qualifiers could be down to five as Dem hopefuls debate for a final time before Feb. 3's Iowa caucuses. Tuesday, Jan. 14, at 8 p.m., CNN

Diary of a Future President

A Cuban-American girl who aspires to the White House wrestles with the challenges of middle school in a kid-friendly new series from *Jane the Virgin*'s Gina Rodriguez. Available for streaming Friday, Jan. 17, Disney+



Malkovich: Another unlikely shepherd

Show of the week**The New Pope**

It's official now: Pontiffs are hot. While Netflix's *The Two Popes* has put a pair of venerable actors in the Oscar conversation, director Paolo Sorrentino is unveiling a nine-part sequel series to his weird and wonderful *The Young Pope*. At the close of that 2016 series, Jude Law's arrogant Pius XIII had slipped into a coma from which no recovery is expected. Enter John Malkovich, playing a successor whose alternate brand of charisma will be tested when Pius miraculously recovers. Where the story falters, simply savor the stars and Sorrentino's visual brilliance. Begins Monday, Jan. 13, at 9 p.m., HBO

Perfect schnitzel: Simple sophistication, straight from the Alps

Anyone who's traveled the Alps knows that you can find great schnitzels almost everywhere, said Meredith Erickson in *Alpine Cooking* (Ten Speed Press). "Whether it's a *rifugio*, hut, hostel, motorway stop, café, five-star hotel, low-end joint, high-end lodge—you name it, they serve it." But achieving the same level of deliciousness at home required a lot of testing before I arrived at the recipe and method below.

Serve schnitzel with a side of potatoes and perhaps cranberry jam, and don't be afraid to apply the same technique to chicken or pork cutlets. But do pay close attention to the frying method: "In my opinion, the best schnitzel should have a bit of puff, meaning some nice air pockets between the meat and the breading."

Recipe of the week

Wiener schnitzel

6 thin veal cutlets, 5 to 6 oz each
Fine sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
2 cups all-purpose flour
3 eggs, beaten
2 cups fine dried bread crumbs
1 quart peanut or canola oil
¼ cup chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
3 tbsp unsalted butter, melted
3 lemons, halved

Cover chopping board with plastic wrap.



If the coating puffs, you've nailed it.

Lay veal down. Cover with another sheet of plastic. Use a meat mallet to pound meat slices to a thickness of ¼ inch. Season on both sides with salt and pepper.

Set up a breading station: Place flour on one plate, eggs in a shallow bowl, and bread crumbs on a second plate. Use a clean platter at the end to hold breaded slices. Preheat oven to 300. Line a baking sheet with a layer of paper towels. Pour peanut oil into a large Dutch oven or cast-iron pan. The oil level should be about ¾-inch deep. Warm oil over low heat until it reaches 265 on a deep-fry thermometer.

Take a slice of veal, dredge it in flour to coat completely, then shake off excess. Dip meat into egg until well coated, then, with a fork, lift, letting excess egg wash drip back into bowl. Transfer cutlet to bread crumbs, flipping to coat well on both sides. Shake off extra crumbs and place breaded veal on platter. Repeat process with remaining slices.

Working with tongs, slip one piece of veal into hot oil and cook until pale golden brown, 3 to 3½ minutes. Watch the oil temperature, adjusting to keep it close to 265. While meat is frying, if you notice parts of the slice surfacing above the oil, gently lift and rock pan by the handle to encourage the oil to wash over the meat. Otherwise, leave meat untouched and unflipped, to avoid puncturing the coating and releasing the steam that creates a soufflé effect. Transfer finished schnitzel to prepared baking sheet. Place in oven to keep warm.

When frying is done, drop chopped parsley in the hot oil and fry for 10 seconds. Using a slotted spoon, remove from oil and transfer to a paper towel. Place schnitzels on individual plates, then drizzle ½ tbsp melted butter across each and garnish with a sprinkle of fried parsley. Plate with lemon halves for squeezing. Serves 6.

The best of Miami: A city more than ready for Feb. 2's big game



A full house at Papi Steak

white marble on the walls and floors provides a backdrop to bright-green midcentury-modern seating, a vertical garden wall, and beautifully plated vegetable-focused food. And just upstairs sits Le Jardinier's eye-catching sibling, L'Atelier de Joël Robuchon. 151 NE 41st St., (305) 402-9060

Papi Steak Think of this instant celebrity haunt as "an homage to old Miami-meets-Hollywood glamour," said the *New York Post*. Halftime headliner J-Lo celebrated the opening of *Hustlers* here, but partners David Grutman and David "Papi" Einhorn have made sure customers return regularly for the signature steak, the wagyu pastrami, the Maine lobster, and the chicken schnitzel. 736 1st St., Miami Beach, (305) 800-7274

Cafe La Trova "Forget Disney—this is the happiest place in Florida," said the *Miami New Times*. Created by chef Michelle Bernstein and celebrated *cantinero* Julio Cabrera, the Little Havana nightspot stays open well past midnight on weekends, mixing live *trova* music or Cuban jazz; red-vested bartenders throwing daiquiris; and a stellar menu featuring ceviches, short ribs, and paella croquettes. 971 SW 8th St., (786) 615-4379

As Super Bowl revelers will soon learn, said **Curt Hollingsworth** in *Thrillist.com*, "in Miami, finding a good restaurant is always an exercise in separating hype from reality." But while some of the city's most exciting new eateries (think Boia De and Balloo) are too small to recommend to a crowd, at least a few current glitzy hot spots deliver more than people watching and eye-popping design.

Le Jardinier The city's very finest-looking new restaurant "went over the top in its décor in the best possible way," said *Eater.com*. Black-and-

Wine: Three value reds

"Every year, I sample thousands of wines," said Elin McCoy in *Bloomberg.com*, "and I'm always on the hunt for great bargain bottles." The three below are among the best values I discovered last year, and they suggest two ways to make similar finds: Know which countries offer high value, and seek entry-level wines from top estates.

2017 Veramonte Pinot Noir (\$11). "It's hard to find any wine worth drinking for this price, much less a pinot noir." But you can trust this "scented, fruity" example from Chile's Casablanca Valley. "It's a great party pour."

2015 Quinta De Chocapalha (\$19). This "softly plush" blend of four Portuguese varietals offers an entry-level glimpse of what star winemaker Sandra Tavares can do.

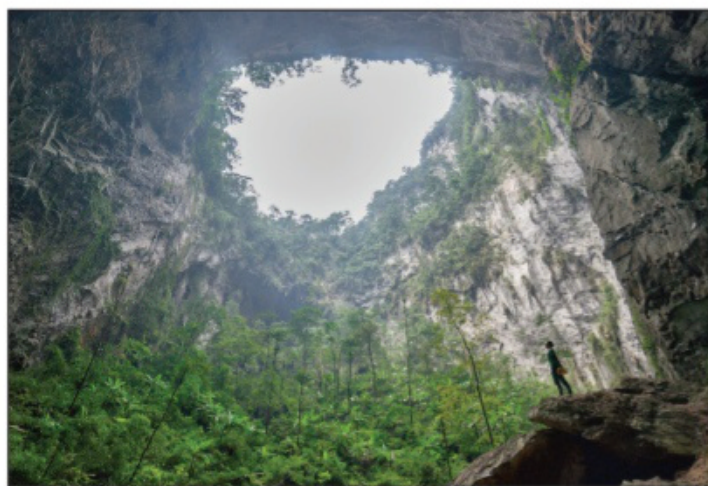
2016 Aslina Cabernet Sauvignon (\$26). Aslina is a label created by Ntsiki Biyela, South Africa's first female black winemaker. Her minty cabernet is "like a midpoint between Bordeaux and Napa."



This week's dream: Swimming in the great caves of Vietnam

The people of Phong Nha know they have something special, said Patrick Scott in *The New York Times*. The small village in central Vietnam has evolved over the past decade from a poor farming and fishing community into one of the country's premier adventure and ecotourism destinations. But with mass tourism meanwhile spreading "from the mountains of Sapa to the beaches of Nha Trang," Phong Nha and the local government in Quang Binh province are managing to keep out big crowds and megaresorts while licensing only environmentally conscious tour operators that employ locals. That's incredible—and fortunate—because Phong Nha sits amid "a captivating, almost prehistoric landscape," with snaking rivers and valleys surrounded by "jungle-draped" limestone peaks.

The surrounding national park is most famous for its dozens of spectacular caves, which were discovered relatively recently and first opened to the public in 2012.



A hiker at Hang Son Doong gazes toward the sky.

Two—Hang Son Doong and Hang En—rank first and third among the world's largest: These are caverns 30 to 40 stories tall with their own jungles and flowing rivers. I currently live in Ho Chi Minh City, and have made a habit of flying to Dong Hoi to make the 50-minute drive to Phong Nha and the park. Highlights have included a surreal swimming tour of the Tu Lan cave system, but the region's appeal goes beyond

caving and jungle hiking. "You need do nothing more than ride a bike to savor its charm: Past the fish farmers on the emerald-green river; the water buffaloes lolling in watery rice paddies where women in conical hats bend down to plant; the white storks taking flight as an orange sun sets."

Many locals who once depended on illegal logging and poaching are now supporting their families through tourism, renting out small guesthouses called homestays. As a result, "it's not unusual to find a decent room in Phong Nha for \$10 or \$15 online." Farmers, meanwhile, invite travelers to sleep, eat, and lend a hand at their homesteads. At the Duck Stop, a popular attraction, owner Quynh Tran is always happy to host visitors who are eager to take selfies while feeding his 150 white ducks. "They come and do my job and pay me money," he says. *Oxalis Adventure* (oxalisadventure.com) offers full-day caving trips for about \$72.

Hotel of the week



At one with the desert

Wadi Rum Bedouin Camp

Wadi Rum, Jordan

When you arrive in Wadi Rum, "it feels like you've landed on another planet," said Amanda Orr in *The Washington Post*. Though visitors to southern Jordan's dramatic desert valley can now stay in camps enclosed by air-conditioned domes, I prefer the "truly unforgettable" experience of camping under the stars at this family-run Bedouin camp. After a Jeep tour of the desert, my host showed me quilts his mother had made, and served lamb and rice cooked in a pot buried in hot coals. I woke to the grunts of the camels that provided our slow ride back to town. wadirumbedouincamp.com; tents from \$49

Getting the flavor of...

Maine's huge meteorite collection

A world-class science museum recently opened in rural Maine, and "it's astounding," said Diane Bair and Pamela Wright in *The Boston Globe*. Regardless of whether you know or care much about geology, the Maine Mineral & Gem Museum will "inform, inspire, and entertain you" with its sparkling specimens and interactive displays. The 15,000-square-foot facility in the town of Bethel was originally conceived as a tribute to Maine's history of gem and mineral mining, and the museum showcases the state's bounty with huge hunks of tourmaline, aquamarine, and amethyst. But the mission grew to include the world's largest collections of lunar and Martian meteorites, some of which visitors can touch. One moon rock is five times larger than anything NASA owns. The museum also displays a 4.6 billion-year-old igneous rock—the oldest ever discovered. "Everywhere, you're invited to touch screens, push buttons, look closer, and learn."

The Lowcountry's 'crown jewel'

Pretty Beaufort, S.C., nearly didn't make it out of the 19th century, said Patti Nickell in the *Chicago Tribune*. In 1861, shortly after the Civil War began 70 miles north, at Fort Sumter, the whole state was under siege, and Beaufort could have been razed. Fortunately, because locals buried their riches and fled, the Union Army spared the town's mansions, and today visitors can wander "street after street" of stately manors. Some historic homes are now hotels, and the charming Beaufort Inn is one of the best. "If you want a true Southern experience," eat dinner on the upstairs veranda at the Anchorage 1770 Inn, whose owners are the sort of Southerners "who take it as a personal affront if their guests don't enjoy themselves." To see how water has defined the city, take a marshland boat ride with Captain Dick's river tours. And save time for day trips to places like nearby Edisto, a low-key coastal island and "the yin to Myrtle Beach's yang."

Last-minute travel deals

'Drunk yoga' in Cancún

Join yoga teacher-astrologist Eli Walker for her Feb. 20–23 "New Year, Do You" retreat, with sip-and-stretch yoga classes, birth chart readings, and character development workshops. From \$899 a person. Book by Jan. 31 with code DOYOU. stories.cheapcaribbean.com

A Napa spa escape

Massages and geothermal pools await at Solage resort in Calistoga, Calif. Book two or more nights before Jan. 31 to receive \$250 in credit to spend at the restaurant or spa. Rates start at about \$539. Good for stays through April 30. aubergeresorts.com

A Canadian wildlife tour

See polar bears, beluga whales, and arctic foxes on Alexander + Roberts' weeklong summer tour based in Churchill, Manitoba, the polar bear capital of the world. Book by Jan. 31 to save \$600 off the starting rate of \$7,499 per person. alexanderroberts.com



Gamboa Rainforest Resort



Panama Canal, Gaillard Cut



Playa Bonita



Panama City



Red-Eyed Tree Frog



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Day 1 Panama City, Panama

Welcome to fun, vibrant Panama. Caravan provides airport transfers.

Day 2 Old Panama, Miraflores

Visit the ruins of Panama Viejo (Old Panama), the city founded by the Spanish in 1519. Visit the Canal Museum at Miraflores, overlooking the Panama Canal locks. Learn about the Canal construction and operation.

Day 3 Panama Canal Cruise

Boat ride on Gatun Lake. See the lush jungle watershed region of the Panama Canal. Cruise through jungle canals and by hilltop islands. Look for monkeys. Enjoy a relaxing two night stay at your resort located in the rainforest.

Day 4 Panama Canal Cruise

Today an unforgettable adventure as you cruise more of the Panama Canal. Cruise by the Bridge of the Americas, pass through Miraflores and Pedro Miguel Locks, and cross the Continental Divide. Get up-close views of the canal locks.

Day 5 Embera Tribe, Playa Bonita

Cruise on the Chagres River to visit an Embera tribal village. The Embera inhabit the rainforests of Panama. Then, visit a live jungle sloth exhibition. Continue to your beach hotel for a relaxing two night stay on the Pacific Coast.

Day 6 Playa Bonita

Entire day at leisure to enjoy your beach resort. Swim in your hotel's infinity pool. Time to beachcomb and enjoy your resort's amenities.

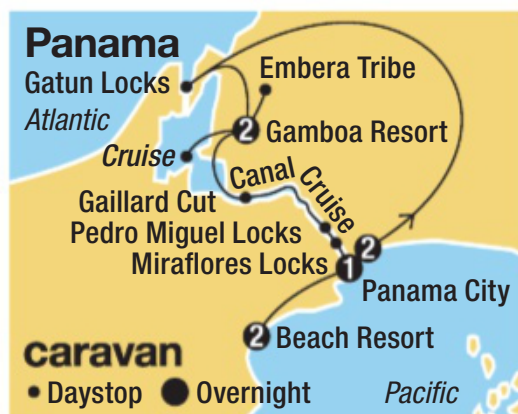
Day 7 Handicrafts, Museum

Visit a Kuna tribal marketplace. Shop for colorful mola embroidery and handicrafts. Visit the Museum of Biodiversity, designed by Frank Gehry. Enjoy a farewell dinner.

Day 8 Panama City

Tour ends after breakfast at your hotel. Caravan provides airport transfers. Hasta la Vista—Thanks for vacationing with Caravan!

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Hotels - listed by day

- 1, 2 **Panama City** Marriott Courtyard
- 3, 4 **Gamboa** Rainforest Resort
- 5, 6 **Playa Bonita** Westin Resort
- 7 **Panama City** InterContinental Miramar

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The 2020 Polestar 1: What the critics say

Autoblog.com

"Rarely has a car caused so many heads to swivel." The Polestar 1, the first product rolled out by Volvo's new offshoot for electric vehicles, is a "phenomenal" plug-in hybrid—"basically everything one could ever hope for in an awesome car with an environmental conscience." A meticulously crafted 619-hp grand tourer, it's fast, goes farther on a charge than any other hybrid, and "looks like hot, sophisticated sex." Unfortunately, just 1,500 will be built, and the U.S. market will get only 150 a year.

Wired.com

Don't feel left out. Polestar's flagship is

"something of an oddball," both the first and last hybrid that will be produced by the company, which in July will release its first all-electric vehicle, a relatively affordable five-door that represents "a potentially compelling alternative to the Tesla Model 3." Still, a performance brand needs cachet, and "if the idea is to capture eyeballs, the Polestar 1 makes a lot of sense."

GreenCarReports.com

It also promises great performance from Polestars to come. Because the 1's rear wheels are powered separately by two electric motors that sit on the rear axle, the car delivers cornering grip that's "stickier



Not your grandpa's Volvo, from \$155,000

than jam side down on a hot day." We've come to expect rocket-like takeoffs from EVs. But a car that can match that speed in corners? "Now there's a first."

The best of...tech for travelers



DJI Osmo Mobile 3

This motorized smartphone stabilizer can "dramatically" improve the quality of your camera-phone videos, "eliminating all of those unintentional jiggles." The gimbal's arm can also flip quickly between portrait and landscape orientations. \$119, store.dji.com
Source: Gizmodo.com



Langogo Genesis

Once common only in science fiction, handheld translator devices are suddenly everywhere. This one uses advanced AI and noise-canceling microphones to provide "amazingly accurate" translations of 105 languages and dialects. It also doubles as a 4G Wi-Fi hot spot. \$299, langogo.ai
Source: Futurism.com



Zippo HeatBank

Perfect for a ski trip, this rechargeable hand warmer can be a comfort on wintry days for up to nine hours. It has six temperature settings, doubles as a charger, and is available in silver, black, and champagne. \$50, zippo.com
Source: RealSimple.com



Anker Nebula Capsule Projector

Turn any hotel room into a theater with a soda can-size projector that delivers a 100-inch image and 360-degree sound. "Why restrict yourself to watching Netflix on a tiny screen when you could be living large?" \$300, anker.com
Source: LonelyPlanet.com



LectroFan

Trouble sleeping away from home? This compact white noise machine is convenient for travel and easy to use ("even in the dark"). It generates 20 static-like sounds and can be turned up loud enough to drown out barking dogs. \$50, soundofsleep.com
Source: TheWirecutter.com

Tip of the week...

The rules of winter skin care

- **Run a humidifier:** Winter's cold means drier air, so combat the effect by using humidifiers in rooms where you spend significant time.
- **Shorten your showers:** Spending too much time in hot water can damage skin's outer layer. So keep showers short and the water lukewarm.
- **Oil up:** Oil-based skin products prevent moisture from leaving the skin. Apply face and body oils before bed so they have time to absorb, and don't go out without balms or ointments on exposed skin—plus sunscreen for longer outings. "Consider these products your skin-care outerwear."
- **Know your chemistry:** When shopping for moisturizers, learn the ingredients to look for. Particularly beneficial are squalane, allantoin, ceramides, hyaluronic acid, and glycerin—"the gold standard ingredient" because it draws water from the air into your skin.

Source: Woman's Day

And for those who have everything...

"The challenges and dangers facing prehistoric man 50,000 years ago were brutal." Imagine choosing to migrate out of Africa during an ice age and you will appreciate the benefits of the **50,000 B.C.**

Jacket from Vollebak. Inspired by the earliest human adventurers, the rugged jacket is like a four-layer second skin engineered for all-weather protection. The coat's look is no accident, either. As Vollebak notes, when the world is a strange, inhospitable place roamed by mastodons and sabre-tooth tigers, "you need the clothing equivalent of a cave—something to shelter you from driving rain, wind, snow, sun, and terror."

\$1,295, vollebak.com

Source: HiConsumption.com



Best apps...

For finding new friends

- **Patook** helps individuals or even couples find new platonic friends based on shared interests. A "flirt detection" feature prevents users from misusing Patook as a dating app.
- **Meetup** encourages users to arrange group outings or gatherings based on common interests. Whether you love cooking, salsa dancing, sci-fi novels, or board games, like minds await you.
- **Huggle** can connect you and people who frequent the same places you do, "whether you're seeking a gym buddy, fellow library enthusiast, or simply someone to gossip with at your local café."
- **Peanut** is a social network for new moms as well as women who are pregnant or trying to conceive. Those who live near one another can meet up to share advice, support, and friendship.
- **Tourlina** helps women find travel companions, creating matches based on itineraries.

Source: GoodHousekeeping.com

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in McKinney, Texas uses Google Ads to promote its app that matches empty salon seats with independent stylists looking for a space to work, helping local salons triple their revenue.

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This week: Homes in Colorado

1 ► Mountain Village Set in a lower-elevation neighborhood, this four-bedroom home is convenient to restaurants and shops. Built in 1990 and rebuilt in 2010, the European cottage-style house has walnut floors and trim; a stone dining room wall and exposed beams; and a main floor with master suite, two baths, an office, and an exercise room. The 1.3-acre property features patios, stone walls, and mature trees. \$4,985,000. Alex Martin, Telluride Real Estate Corp./Christie's International Real Estate, (970) 728-1669



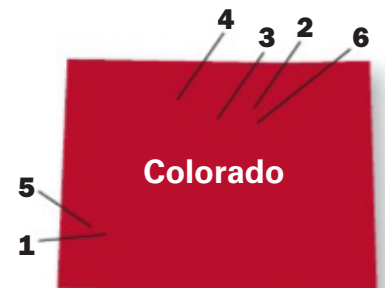
2 ◀ Longmont Rocking R Horse Ranch looks out on the mountains from more than 5,000 feet. The four-bedroom main house has a metal gambrel roof, an interior rock pillar, exposed beams, and an open kitchen with granite counters. The 110-acre property includes two staff houses, a 36,400-square-foot indoor arena, two outdoor arenas, a horse barn, a hay barn, and 63 acres irrigated by waterways lined with old-growth cottonwood trees. \$4,950,000. Jeff Buerger, Hall and Hall, (303) 861-8282

3 ► Grant This 1925 pueblo-style stone house was designed for Adolph Coors by architect Justus "Gus" Roehling and built by Native American craftsmen from Taos, N.M. The home has 11 bedrooms, each with a honeycomb wood-burning fireplace; exposed beams and logs; carved door headers; handmade windows; and a modern chef's kitchen. Outside are patios, a hot tub, a pond, and 16 wooded acres abutting a national forest. \$5,000,000. Michelle Seward, LIV Sotheby's International Realty, (303) 886-0670

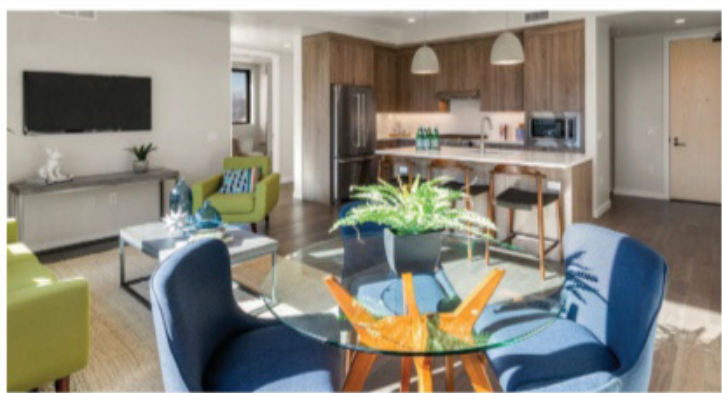




4 ► Oak Creek Built in 2002, this five-bedroom home is just 13 miles from Steamboat Springs. The house features a standing-seam metal roof and cedar-clad barrel ceilings, a double-height great room with stone fireplace and mountain views, and a lower level with bunk and media rooms. The 35-acre property has an outdoor fireplace and hot tub, meadows, woods, a stream, and a pond. \$2,249,000. Cam Boyd, Steamboat Sotheby's International Realty, (970) 846-8100



5 ◀ Placerville The windows and decks of this 1991 log home look out on flowering meadows and Mount Wilson, Dolores Peak, and Yellow Mountain. The house includes four bedrooms, three en suite; a double-story great room with wide-plank white-oak floors, a wall of windows, and a floor-to-ceiling wood-burning fireplace; a billiards area; and a hot tub and sauna. The 14-acre property sits next to state land. \$2,495,000. Mark Dollard, Telluride Real Estate Corp./Christie's International Real Estate, (970) 708-0854



6 ► Denver The Lower Highland's new Ivy Residences building puts contemporary apartments in a historic neighborhood. This open-concept unit features a living room with tray ceiling, a kitchen with quartz counters and designer cabinetry, a bedroom with walk-in closet/laundry room, a balcony, wood floors, and deeded parking. Outside are restaurants, entertainment venues, and transportation hubs. \$485,000. Taylor Lawton, PorchLight Real Estate Group, (720) 422-3060



Steal of the week

The news at a glance

The bottom line

■ U.S. airlines posted their 10th consecutive year of profitability, with net income from the four biggest companies tallying \$12.4 billion. From 1979 to 2009, U.S. airlines lost \$59 billion on domestic operations. *CNBC.com*

■ The average cost of an angioplasty in America is \$32,200, compared with \$6,400 in the Netherlands or \$7,400 in Switzerland, the country with the world's second-highest medical costs. An average MRI scan costs \$1,420 here but about \$450 in Britain. *The New York Times*

■ Worldwide sales of knock-off goods exceeded \$520 billion last year, representing 3.3 percent of all global trade. One international counterfeiting ring recently busted by federal authorities was charged with shipping \$472 million worth of counterfeit sneakers. *Qz.com*



■ A touring production of Lin-Manuel Miranda's show *Hamilton* in Chicago took in \$400 million at the box office in the span of three years. At least \$200 million will return to the show's creators, producers, and investors. *Chicago Tribune*

■ The U.S. foreign trade gap narrowed by 8.2 percent in November to the lowest deficit in three years. The goods deficit with China fell to \$357 billion, down from \$419 billion a year ago. *The Wall Street Journal*

■ The total value of U.S. mergers and acquisitions hit \$1.8 trillion in 2019, up 6 percent from 2018. A spate of health-care mergers included Bristol-Myers Squibb's \$74 billion purchase of Celgene, the biggest deal of the year. *Axios.com*

Boeing: Still trying to get the 737 Max flying

Boeing's new CEO starts next week, said Julie Johnsson in *Bloomberg.com*—and he's going to be busy. The 65-year-old David Calhoun, a "polished communicator" who is seen as a "stabilizer" by insiders, is tasked with fixing the "reputation for engineering prowess" that was left in "tatters" by Dennis Muilenburg, who was fired last month. This week, the company did an about-face on training for 737 Max pilots, saying it would recommend expensive simulator sessions—a move the company had resisted. In Iran, a Boeing 737-800 jet, a Max predecessor, crashed shortly after takeoff this week, leading to 176 deaths and new questions for Boeing.



Calhoun: Savior or 'bean counter'?

Federal regulators "face pressure from politicians and peers abroad to be tough on Boeing," said Jon Sindreu in *The Wall Street Journal*. Calhoun's predecessor didn't understand that, and "harried them with repeated claims that the 737 would be recertified in 2019." Calhoun needs to mend fences with regulators, but he also needs to "refocus the company culture on quality control and away from excessive cost cutting." Returning power to the engineers would send a strong signal that Boeing has learned from its fatal mistakes—though that might not come naturally to Calhoun, the latest in a series of Boeing managers who built careers as "bean counters" at General Electric.

Facebook: One ring to rule them all?

A top Facebook executive told employees they "had a moral duty not to tilt the scales against President Trump" in the election, said Kevin Roose in *The New York Times*. Andrew Bosworth, a "longtime confidant" of CEO Mark Zuckerberg, wrote in a meandering 2,500-word post this week that, "as a liberal, he found himself wanting to use the social network's powerful platform against Trump" by fact-checking partisan misinformation. But Bosworth said he agreed with Zuckerberg's decision not to limit political ads, comparing the temptation to use Facebook's powers to the corrupting influence of Sauron's ring in *The Lord of the Rings*.

McDonald's: New CEO brings culture shock

McDonald's new chief executive is yelling last call for the company's "party culture," said Heather Haddon and Suzanne Vranica in *The Wall Street Journal*. People close to Chris Kempczinski said this week the new CEO will end the "macho, guys' club" environment with its weekly happy hours in the corporate lounge. Kempczinski's predecessor, Steve Easterbrook, was fired after admitting to a consensual relationship with an employee. Two African-American executives sued the chain this week, alleging they'd been demoted "as a result of discrimination and a hostile climate" that got worse when Easterbrook ran the company.

Tesla: Most valuable U.S. carmaker in history

Tesla's stock surged to new highs this week, bringing its total market value to \$90 billion—the highest ever for a U.S. carmaker, and greater than that of GM and Ford combined, said Michael Wayland in *CNBC.com*. Shares rose after Tesla announced that its \$2 billion Shanghai plant, brought up and running in just 10 months, is already producing 1,000 vehicles a week. That comes on the heels of a fourth quarter "in which Tesla significantly topped estimates" for deliveries, hitting 367,500 for 2019 and meeting CEO Elon Musk's promise to sell at least 360,000 cars—a goal some analysts had called close to impossible.

China: Trade truce to be signed in D.C.

China plans to send a delegation to Washington to sign the phase-one trade deal next week, said Zhou Xin in the *South China Morning Post*. The Chinese traveling party "had originally planned to set off earlier in the month, but had to change their travel schedule" after President Trump tweeted that he would sign the deal "with high representatives from Beijing" on Jan. 15. Chinese President Xi Jinping is not expected to attend personally. "Although eager to sign the deal to ensure stability," the Chinese "have been less inclined to make a major show of it."

Hard row to hoe? Not for a 1979 tractor

"For tech-weary Midwest farmers, 40-year-old tractors are now a hot commodity," said Adam Belz in the Minneapolis *Star Tribune*. Machines from John Deere's popular "Iron Horse" series, produced between 1977 and 1982, are "starting bidding wars" today; a typical model costs \$18,000, but those with little use can fetch much more—one 1979 tractor sold for \$61,000 in August. That's still a lot less than the \$150,000 a new machine costs, and it comes without tech headaches. Gripped one farmer about today's tractors: "Anytime something breaks, you've got to have a computer to fix it." That's a problem if you're stuck in the field "waiting for a service truck from the dealership." Tractors from the earlier era still "have enough horsepower to do anything most farmers need," and their design isn't very different from those of more recent vintage, except they come without "the irksome software."

IRAs: New rules jumble inheritance plans

The U.S. last month enacted the most significant retirement-planning reform in over a decade, said **Jamie Hopkins** in *Kiplinger's*. The Setting Every Community Up for Retirement Enhancement (SECURE) Act, tucked into December's \$1.4 trillion budget package, brings both positives and some "potentially disastrous consequences" for retirees. The legislation was primarily intended to "reduce costs associated with setting up retirement plans for small employers," making it easier for them to band together in pooled plans while making many part-time workers eligible to contribute. It also raises the mandatory age to begin taking withdrawals from retirement accounts (known as RMDs) from 70.5 to 72, and eliminates the age 70.5 cutoff for retirement contributions, a benefit to those who keep working late in life. But to fill the revenue gaps left by these changes, Congress killed the so-called stretch IRA. Starting this year, if the owner of an Individual Retirement Account or 401(k) passes away "and leaves the account to a beneficiary other than their spouse," minor children, or heirs who are disabled or chronically ill, "the beneficiary will have only 10 years" to empty the entire account. That kills a popular tax strategy in which grandchildren drew from an inherited IRA over decades. Now the required withdrawals could easily fall in the heir's prime earning years, and what was supposed to be a tax-advantaged account would get taxed at top rates.



Is it fair to change the rules on inherited IRAs?

That provision is a betrayal, said *The Wall Street Journal* in an editorial. Americans have been assured for years that their retirement savings can be passed on to heirs, with RMDs "stretched" over a lifetime to build generational wealth. But at the stroke of midnight on Jan. 1, such estate plans were turned into pumpkins. "Imagine a 90-year-old who banked on this strategy, diligently saving money and thinking about his legacy" and who is now left holding the bag. It's true that tax loopholes are not "a holy writ." But "people need to have faith that future politicians won't rewrite the rules willy-nilly."

One workaround if you have a substantial IRA and are caught in the new regulations is a Roth IRA conversion, said **Carleton English** in *Barron's*. Rather than converting it all at once, you can "do piecemeal Roth conversions over a number of years" that will "allow you to take advantage of today's low tax rates." Once you've switched to the Roth, withdrawals by your heirs will be tax free. In some cases, you can also reduce the tax burden by naming separate beneficiaries, spreading the gains over many tax returns, instead of funneling them into a trust, as many tax experts advised before the change. And if your IRA is going to a spouse, you can breathe a sigh of relief: The dreaded new 10-year rule doesn't apply.

What the experts say

Free File flies free

"Finding free online tax filing should be easier this year for millions of Americans," said Justin Elliott and Paul Kiel in *ProPublica.org*. The IRS announced last week that it is lifting its "years-old prohibition on creating its own online filing system" that could compete with software like TurboTax. ProPublica reported last year that "the industry, led by TurboTax maker Intuit, has long misled taxpayers who are eligible to file for free into paying" while lobbying the IRS against creating its own system. Now all companies will have to "standardize the naming convention of their Free File version as 'IRS Free File program'" so as not to confuse customers. The agency also is barring companies from "engaging in any practice" that blocks their Free File versions from showing up on search engine results.

The end of the shared lunch

What happened to the workday lunch break? asked Sarah Holder in *CityLab.com*. "If the *Mad Men*-era power lunch was a sluggish male display of decadence, today's is a race-the-clock exercise in brutal efficiency." Maybe it's because urban professionals today "lack the expense accounts, disposable income, and stretchy sense of time" of previous worker generations,

but an entire ecosystem of startups and food dispensaries has emerged to take advantage. One such company, Sweetgreen, is installing kiosks in offices so workers can "order online and the next day, the biodegradable bowl of Kale Caesar will materialize frictionlessly by lunchtime." Lunch startups like MealPal have cut the process of going out and getting a take-out meal to 15 minutes or less—as long as you are willing to eat alone at your desk.

#MeToo bots can surveil your email

Programmers are developing artificial intelligence bots that can scan workplace emails for abusive language, said Isabel Woodford in *The Guardian*. "Known as #MeTooBots," they run on an algorithm "trained to identify potential bullying, including sexual harassment, in company documents, emails, and chat." Anything identified as being "potentially problematic" is then sent to a lawyer or human resources. Similar technology can be used in a lawsuit to "scour large volumes of digital communications to fight harassment claims." However, while AI currently can be "taught to look for specific triggers," it's unable to pick up on cultural or "unique interpersonal dynamics," increasing the risk that the bots might flag too little or too much.

Charity of the week



Archaeology Southwest

Founded in 1989, **Archaeology Southwest** (archaeologysouthwest.org) works with Native American communities, researchers, landowners, and stakeholders to identify and preserve historical sites and resources in the Southwest. To protect these cultural sites, the non-profit both purchases land and develops strategies with current landowners to safeguard the resources on their property. It also advocates for the designation of significant cultural sites as federal monuments, as it's now doing for the lands along the Great Bend of the Gila. To engage the public, Archaeology Southwest offers a hands-on course in partnership with the University of Arizona to teach students how to excavate and conduct surveys in the historically rich region.

Each charity we feature has earned a four-star overall rating from Charity Navigator, which rates not-for-profit organizations on the strength of their finances, their governance practices, and the transparency of their operations. Four stars is the group's highest rating.

Great escape: A corporate chieftain flees Japan

One of Japan's most celebrated businessmen has become "the world's most famous fugitive," said **Matthew Campbell** in *Bloomberg.com*. On Dec. 29, Carlos Ghosn, the ousted leader of Nissan and Renault, pulled off a cinematic escape while awaiting trial on charges related to executive compensation and use of company resources. Ghosn felt he had been railroaded and held "hostage" by the Japanese legal system; believing that "his prospects of proving his innocence in Japan were dismal," he evaded guards at his home in Tokyo and hopped a bullet train to Osaka before boarding a private jet bound for Beirut. Ghosn's lawyers had taken his travel documents, but Ghosn—who is a citizen of Brazil, France, and Lebanon—had two French passports and was allowed to keep one in a case with a combination lock that could be easily cracked. A group of "between 10 and 15 people" worked for months on a plan for extraction, said **Nick Kostov** in *The Wall Street Journal*, one that included help from a former U.S. Green Beret. They "visited at least 10 Japanese airports" to find the weakest security measures. "Luggage too large for X-ray scanning is supposed to be opened by security staff," but one "large black box, generally used for concert equipment," must have eluded their notice. Ghosn was inside, and breathing, thanks to holes drilled in the bottom.

Apparently, that's what you buy the man under house arrest who has everything, said **Jeffrey Goldfarb** in *BreakingViews.com*. This is a guy who once threw himself "a Marie Antoinette-themed wedding and birthday bash" in Versailles. Now he has decamped from Japan to Lebanon, one of the world's most corrupt



Traveling first class—except for the big box

countries—where, amazingly, he's living in a mansion owned by Nissan. Ghosn claims that "he was taken down by Japanese executives and government officials who feared he would shepherd a French takeover of Nissan," said **Josh Barro** in *New York* magazine. That might well be true, but it doesn't mean he's not guilty. Ghosn is accused of circumventing Nissan's board to pay himself more than \$80 million. He seems to have felt that his deal with the company he ran was essentially "I save Nissan, you give me lots of money," and no one should look too closely at the details. In some places, such as the United States, where CEOs are paid a lot more, that sum might have raised no eyebrows. But it was "way out of step with Japanese norms" and laws about CEO pay.

Whatever Ghosn's shortcomings, he had kept "Nissan and Renault from coming apart at the seams," said **Nick Kostov** and **Sean McLain** in *The Wall Street Journal*. "Since Mr. Ghosn was arrested in November 2018, insiders at the companies said, the two partners, lacking a chief to impose order, have reverted to the corporate equivalent of a nasty and brutish state of nature." Now both companies look increasingly unviable; their shares are down by a third since Ghosn's arrest. Thank Japan's "notorious bureaucracy" for this fiasco, said **William Pesek** in *The Washington Post*. For all the talk of sweeping economic upgrades, Japan Inc. remains mired in obsolete ways of doing business, including a malicious "double standard—one for Japanese executives, another for non-Japanese"—that made Ghosn a target of the corporate establishment, which "had never seen a foreigner rise so high."

Big Tech can still save us...

Kara Swisher
The New York Times

The next decade in tech could be a lot better than you expect, said Kara Swisher. I've been a strong critic of the industry, for good reason. But there are also "big, positive ideas that I think you will hear a lot more about in the coming years." I predict that more tech investors will turn their attention toward combating climate change—as Bill Gates already has. "There are many areas to explore, including battery storage, renewables, software and artificial intelligence to help us understand climate data, the food ecosystem, and even the way we construct our buildings." I'm also convinced "there is money to be

made in appealing to our weariness with how our tech lives have been shaped." The savviest tech entrepreneurs will create new forms of communication that eliminate toxicity and anonymity and finally "give the advantage to users." Lastly, there is yet another opportunity to push for gadgets that will take us away from the screen instead of feeding screen addiction. By 2030, "carrying around a device in our hand and staring at it will be a thing of the past." Tech instead will surround us, incorporated into our daily lives, invisible as the electric grid. President Trump's tweets will be gone, too. Probably.

...just don't count on electric cars

Charles Lane
The Washington Post

I'm skeptical that electric cars will represent "the green wave of the transportation future," said Charles Lane. Electric-car boosters of the past decade have told us that "because gas-powered cars account for between one-sixth and one-fifth of U.S. carbon emissions, electrifying them could make a big difference." That makes sense, but only if electric cars get adopted *en masse*. That won't happen until "they can do everything gas-powered vehicles do—including the ability to go hundreds of miles without refueling, and refueling easily—at a comparable cost." Until then, they will remain "a niche product" for the wealthy. State and federal governments have bestowed billions

in subsidies for electric-car sales and production, "yet as of March 2019, there were 1.18 million electric vehicles on the road," two-thirds of which were owned by households earning \$100,000 or more. Chevrolet discontinued its Volt after selling only about 150,000 since 2011. Other companies are ramping up electric offerings, but it's a "response to regulatory pressure," not to consumer demand. I admit I have underestimated the staying power of Tesla, and it did sell 300,000 of its Model 3s in 2019. Owners swear by it. But "the median global forecast by industry experts is 125 million EVs on the road worldwide by 2030." I'm taking the under.

The radio host who shocked his way to success

Don Imus

1940–2019

During his five decades on air, Don Imus entertained and offended in equal measure. A pioneer of shock radio, his shows were filled with irreverent attacks on celebrities, women, gay people, ethnic groups, and politicians from both parties: President Bill Clinton was a “pot-smoking weasel,” Newt Gingrich “a man who would eat roadkill.” Interspersed among the insults were unpredictable and often erudite discussions with historians, politicians, and media personalities. It was a winning formula. At its peak, *Imus in the Morning* had 3 million daily listeners and earned its host \$10 million a year. But in 2007, Imus stepped over the line when he called the successful, largely black Rutgers University women’s basketball team “nappy-headed hos.” The comment sparked outrage, and advertisers deserted the show, which was eventually dropped by CBS Radio. “I wasn’t trying to be outrageous,” Imus said of his career in 2019. “It’s just the way I thought.”

He was born in Riverside, Calif., to an alcoholic cattle rancher and “a well-to-do local beauty,” said *The Washington Post*. Popular but a troublemaker, Imus quit high school at age 17 to join the Marines. After two years in the military,



he worked stints as a uranium miner, railroad brakeman, window dresser, and singer-songwriter before enrolling at a broadcasting school. “Kicked out for diverting his government tuition fee payments to himself,” Imus found work at a succession of small California radio stations, said *The Times* (U.K.). Fired from his second job for saying “hell” on the air, he earned notoriety in his third gig by phoning a Sacramento McDonald’s and posing as a National Guard sergeant who needed to feed his hungry troops, ordering 1,200 hamburgers to go. He soon moved on to Cleveland and then New York City, where *Imus in the Morning* premiered on WNBC in 1971.

It was “an overnight sensation,” said *The New York Times*. But as his fame increased, so did Imus’ consumption of vodka and cocaine. Sacked in 1977 after a series of no-shows, he was back on the air within two years and more popular than ever. After the Rutgers incident, it was eight months before Imus got back behind the mic. He expressed regret for his “reprehensible” remarks—a rare moment of contrition—but never regained momentum. “I talk to millions of people every day,” said Imus, who retired in 2018. “I just like it when they can’t talk back.”

The hard-partying Yankees pitcher who achieved perfection

When Don Larsen took the mound against the Brooklyn Dodgers in Game 5 of the 1956 World Series, few in the stands at Yankee Stadium

Don Larsen

1929–2020

expected anything momentous. Nicknamed

Gooney Bird by his fellow New York Yankees, the 27-year-old had distinguished himself more as a lover of nightlife than as a winner of ballgames, and he was surprised to even get tapped for the start by manager Casey Stengel. But with his distinctive no-windup delivery, designed to keep hitters guessing, Larsen made baseball history that afternoon with the only World Series “perfect game” ever thrown—dispatching 27 batters in 97 pitches. “I never had control like that before or since,” he said. “It just seemed that everything I threw was on the black.”

Growing up in San Diego, Larsen was a star athlete and “an indifferent student,” said the *Los Angeles Times*. He signed with the St. Louis Browns after high school and reached the majors in 1953. When the Browns became the Orioles in 1954, Larsen lost 21 games for the team, and a year later was traded to the Yankees.

Larsen never bested the 11 games he won the year of his perfect game, and three years later he was traded to Kansas City, said the New York *Daily News*. He “bounced around the majors as a reliever” until 1967, when he called it quits with an 81-91 career record. He then spent 24 years selling paper goods in San Jose before retiring. Larsen expressed regret over his middling record, attributing it in part to his partying. But he never tired of reliving that glorious afternoon in 1956. “I think of it every day,” he said. “I can’t help it. It was the best thing that ever happened to me.”

The NBA boss who built a global powerhouse

David Stern

1942–2020

The NBA could barely fill seats when David Stern took over as the league’s commissioner in 1984. Most franchises were money losers, and Finals games were sometimes broadcast on tape delay near midnight. Famously imperious—he shouted at the team owners who technically employed him—Stern remodeled the league from the ground up. He instituted a draft lottery, expanded the NBA from 23 to 30 teams, and negotiated broadcasting deals worth hundreds of millions of dollars. But perhaps his most significant innovation was encouraging the league to market its players as if they were movie stars. As a result, Magic Johnson, Larry Bird, and Michael Jordan became household names around the world, and franchises saw their value rise from a collective \$400 million in 1984 to \$19 billion when Stern retired in 2014. The NBA, he said, should think like Disney: “We have theme parks, only we call them arenas. Our characters are named Magic and Michael.”

Stern was born in Manhattan, “where he grew up a Knicks fan and worked in his father’s deli,” said the Associated Press. After graduating from Columbia Law School, he was hired by a promi-



nent law firm that represented the NBA and handled a landmark anti-trust suit brought by Hall of Famer Oscar Robertson that led to free agency for NBA players. Joining the NBA in 1978 as general counsel, Stern got to work fixing a league in disarray. He helped introduce drug testing—at the time, 75 percent of NBA players were thought to be using cocaine—and a salary cap that meant smaller teams could

compete with wealthier franchises. Those measures stabilized the NBA as a business, allowing it to “capitalize on the revival of the Boston Celtics–Los Angeles Lakers rivalry throughout the 1980s.”

As commissioner, Stern could be a “polarizing figure,” said *The Wall Street Journal*. He represented team owners in four labor disputes that resulted in lockouts—a role that led some to liken Stern to a “plantation overseer”—and was accused of racism after insisting that players wear business attire to games instead of baggy streetwear. Stern also oversaw the NBA’s international expansion, including to China, despite his concerns about its repressive regime. “I have a responsibility to my owners to make money,” he said. “I can never forget that, no matter what my personal feelings might be.”

Learning to accept your decline

All the evidence suggests that your skills and professional achievements will peak much sooner than you expect, said Arthur Brooks in The Atlantic. If you want to avoid irrelevance and bitterness, start planning for that now.

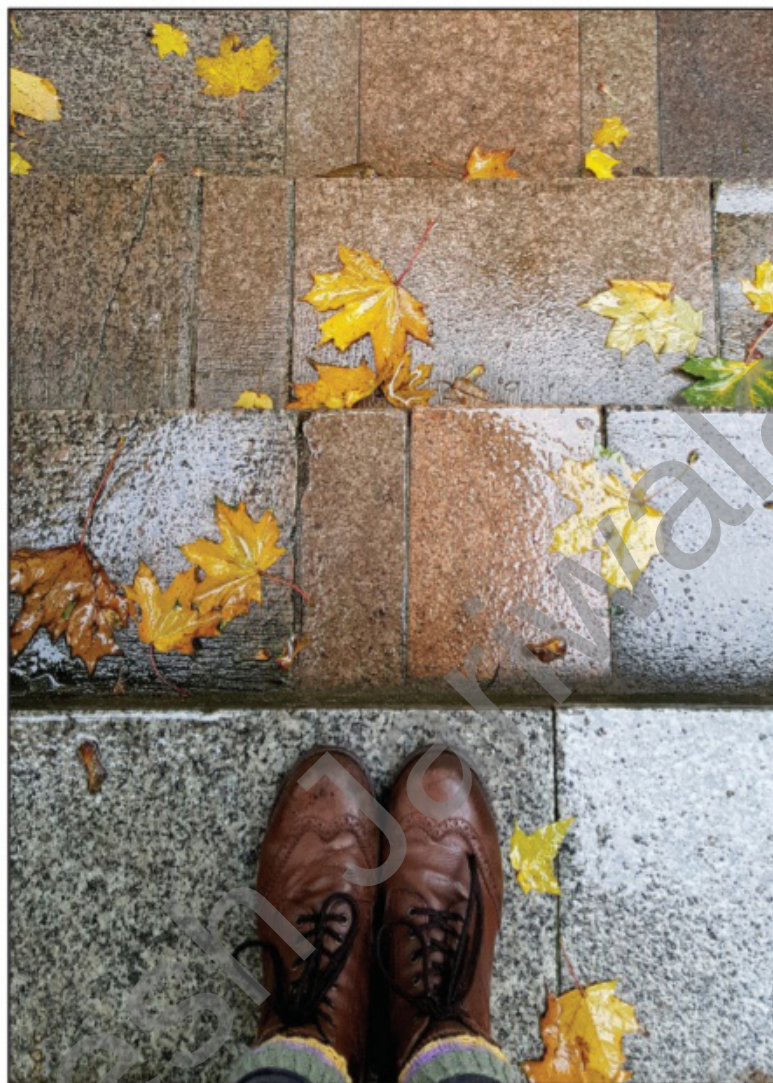
IT'S NOT TRUE that no one needs you anymore." These words came from an elderly woman sitting behind me on a late-night flight from Los Angeles to Washington, D.C. The plane was dark and quiet. A man I assumed to be her husband murmured almost inaudibly in response, something to the effect of "I wish I was dead."

Again, the woman: "Oh, stop saying that." I didn't mean to eavesdrop but couldn't help it. I listened with morbid fascination, forming an image of the man in my head as they talked. I imagined someone who had worked hard all his life in relative obscurity, someone with unfulfilled dreams—perhaps of the degree he never attained, the career he never pursued, the company he never started.

At the end of the flight, as the lights switched on, I finally got a look at the desolate man. I was shocked. I recognized him—he was, and still is, world-famous. Then in his mid-80s, he was beloved as a hero for his courage, patriotism, and accomplishments many decades ago. As he walked up the aisle of the plane behind me, other passengers greeted him with veneration. Standing at the door of the cockpit, the pilot stopped him and said, "Sir, I have admired you since I was a little boy." The older man, apparently wishing for death just a few minutes earlier, beamed with pride at the recognition of his past glories.

For selfish reasons, I couldn't get that scene out of my mind. It was the summer of 2015, shortly after my 51st birthday. I was not world-famous like the man on the plane, but my professional life was going very well. But I had started to wonder: *Can I really keep this going?* I work like a maniac. But even if I stayed at it 12 hours a day, seven days a week, at some point my career would slow and stop. And when it did, what then? Would I one day be looking back wistfully and wishing I were dead?

Though these questions were personal, I decided to approach them as the social scientist I am, treating them as a research project. It felt unnatural—like a surgeon taking out his own appendix. But I plunged ahead, and for the past four years, I have been on a quest to figure out how to turn my eventual professional decline from a matter of dread into an opportunity for progress.



Does aging have to be a dreary descent?

Here's what I've found. The field of "happiness studies" has boomed over the past two decades, and a consensus has developed about well-being as we advance through life. In *The Happiness Curve: Why Life Gets Better After 50*, Jonathan Rauch reviews the strong evidence suggesting that the happiness of most adults falls through their 30s and 40s, then bottoms out in their early 50s.

So what can people expect after that, based on the data? The news is mixed. Almost all studies of happiness over the life span show that, in wealthier countries, most people's contentment starts to increase again in their 50s, until age 70 or so. That is where things get less predictable, however. After 70, some people stay steady in happiness; others get happier until death. Others—men in particular—see their happiness plummet. Indeed, depression and suicide rates for men increase after age 75.

Giftedness and achievements early in life do not appear to provide an insurance policy against suffering later on. In fact, abundant evidence suggests that the waning of ability in people of high accomplishment

is especially brutal psychologically. "Unhappy is he who depends on success to be happy," Alex Dias Ribeiro, a former Formula 1 race-car driver, once wrote. "For such a person, the end of a successful career is the end of the line. His destiny is to die of bitterness or to search for more success in other careers and to go on living from success to success until he falls dead. In this case, there will not be life after success."

There are plenty of examples of this: Take Charles Darwin, who was just 22 when he set out on his five-year voyage aboard the *Beagle* in 1831. Returning at 27, he was celebrated throughout Europe for his discoveries in botany and zoology, and for his early theories of evolution. Over the next 30 years, Darwin took enormous pride in sitting atop the celebrity-scientist pecking order, developing his theories and publishing them as books and essays—the most famous being *On the Origin of Species*, in 1859. But as Darwin progressed into his 50s, he stagnated; he hit a wall in his research. Depressed in his later years, he wrote to a close friend, "I have not the heart or strength at my age to

begin any investigation lasting years, which is the only thing which I enjoy."

I HAVE HAD precocious experience with professional decline. As a child, I had just one goal: to be the world's greatest French-horn player. I worked at it slavishly, practicing hours a day, seeking out the best teachers, and playing in any ensemble I could find. I had pictures of famous horn players on my bedroom wall for inspiration. And for a while, I thought my dream might come true. At 19, I left college to take a job playing professionally in a touring chamber-music ensemble.

But then, in my early 20s, a strange thing happened: I started getting worse. To this day, I have no idea why. My technique began to suffer, and I had no explanation for it. Nothing helped. I visited great teachers and practiced more, but I couldn't get back to where I had been. Pieces that had been easy to play became hard; pieces that had been hard became impossible. Perhaps the worst moment in my young but flailing career came at age 22, when I was performing at Carnegie Hall. While delivering a

short speech about the music I was about to play, I stepped forward, lost my footing, and fell off the stage into the audience.

On the way home from the concert, I mused darkly that the experience was surely a message from God. But I sputtered along for nine more years. I took a position in the City Orchestra of Barcelona, where I increased my practicing but my playing gradually deteriorated. Finally I had to admit defeat: I was never going to turn around my faltering career. So at 31 I gave up, abandoning my musical aspirations entirely, to pursue a doctorate in public policy.

I am lucky to have accepted my decline at a young enough age that I could redirect my life into a new line of work. Still, to this day, the sting of that early decline makes these words difficult to write. I vowed to myself that it wouldn't ever happen again.

Will it? The odds are that it will. In fact, the data are shockingly clear that for most people, in most fields, decline starts earlier than almost anyone thinks. According to research by Dean Keith Simonton, a professor emeritus of psychology at the University of California, Davis, and one of the world's leading experts on the trajectories of creative careers, success and productivity increase for the first 20 years after the inception of a career, on average. So if you start a career in earnest at 30, expect to do your best work around 50 and go into decline soon after that.

The specific timing of peak and decline vary somewhat depending on the field. *Age is, of course, a fever chill / that every physicist must fear. / He's better dead than living still / when once he's past his thirtieth year.* The author of those gloomy lines? Paul Dirac, a winner of the 1933 Nobel Prize in physics. Dirac overstates the point, but only a little. Entrepreneurs, too, peak and decline early, on average. After earning fame and fortune in their 20s, many tech entrepreneurs are in creative decline by age 30. Are there outliers? Of course. But the likelihood of producing a major innovation at age 70 is approximately what it was at age 20—almost nonexistent.

This research concerns people at the very top of professions that are atypical. But the basic finding appears to apply more broadly. In sum, if your profession requires mental processing speed or significant analytic capabilities—the kind of profession most college graduates occupy—noticeable decline is probably going to set in earlier than you imagine. Sorry.

If decline not only is inevitable but also happens earlier than most of us expect, what should we do when it comes for us?

Consider the case of Johann Sebastian Bach. Born in 1685 to a long line of prominent musicians in central Germany, Bach quickly distinguished himself as a musical genius. Early in his career, Bach was considered an astoundingly gifted organist and improviser. Commissions rolled in; royalty sought him out; young composers emulated his style.

But it didn't last—in no small part because his career was overtaken by musical trends ushered in by his own son, Carl Philipp Emanuel, known as C.P.E. to the generations that followed. As classical music displaced baroque, C.P.E.'s prestige boomed while his father's music became passé.



J.S. Bach is a model of late-life reinvention.

Bach easily could have become embittered, like Darwin. Instead, he chose to redesign his life, moving from innovator to instructor. He spent a good deal of his last 10 years writing *The Art of Fugue*, not a famous or popular work in his time, but one intended to teach the techniques of the baroque to his children and students—and, as unlikely as it seemed at the time, to any future generations that might be interested.

When Darwin fell behind as an innovator, he became despondent; his life ended in sad inactivity. When Bach fell behind, he reinvented himself. He died beloved, fulfilled, and—though less famous than he once had been—respected. The lesson for you and me, especially after 50: Be Johann Sebastian Bach, not Charles Darwin.

AT SOME POINT, writing one more book will not add to my life satisfaction; it will merely stave off the end of my book-writing career. The canvas of my life will have another brushstroke that, if I am being forthright, others will barely notice, and will certainly not appreciate very much. The same will be true for most other markers of my success.

I suspect that my own terror of professional decline is rooted in a fear of death—a fear

that, even if it is not conscious, motivates me to act as if death will never come by denying any degradation in my professional abilities—what *New York Times* columnist David Brooks calls “résumé virtues.” This denial is destructive, because it leads me to ignore ethical and spiritual ideals (for Brooks, the “eulogy virtues”) that bring me the greatest joy.

How can I overcome this tendency? The Buddha recommends, of all things, corpse meditation: Many Theravada Buddhist monasteries in Thailand and Sri Lanka display photos of corpses in various states of decomposition for the monks to contemplate. At first this seems morbid. But its logic is grounded in psychological principles—and it's not an exclusively Eastern idea. “To begin depriving death of its greatest advantage over us,” Michel de Montaigne wrote in the 16th century, “let us deprive death of its strangeness, let us frequent it, let us get used to it; let us have nothing more often in mind than death.”

For most people, actively contemplating our demise so that it is present and real, rather than avoiding the thought of it via the mindless pursuit of worldly success, can make death less frightening. Decline is inevitable, and it occurs earlier than almost any of us wants to believe. But misery is not inevitable. Accepting the natural cadence of our abilities sets up the possibility of transcendence, because it allows the shifting of attention to higher spiritual and life priorities.

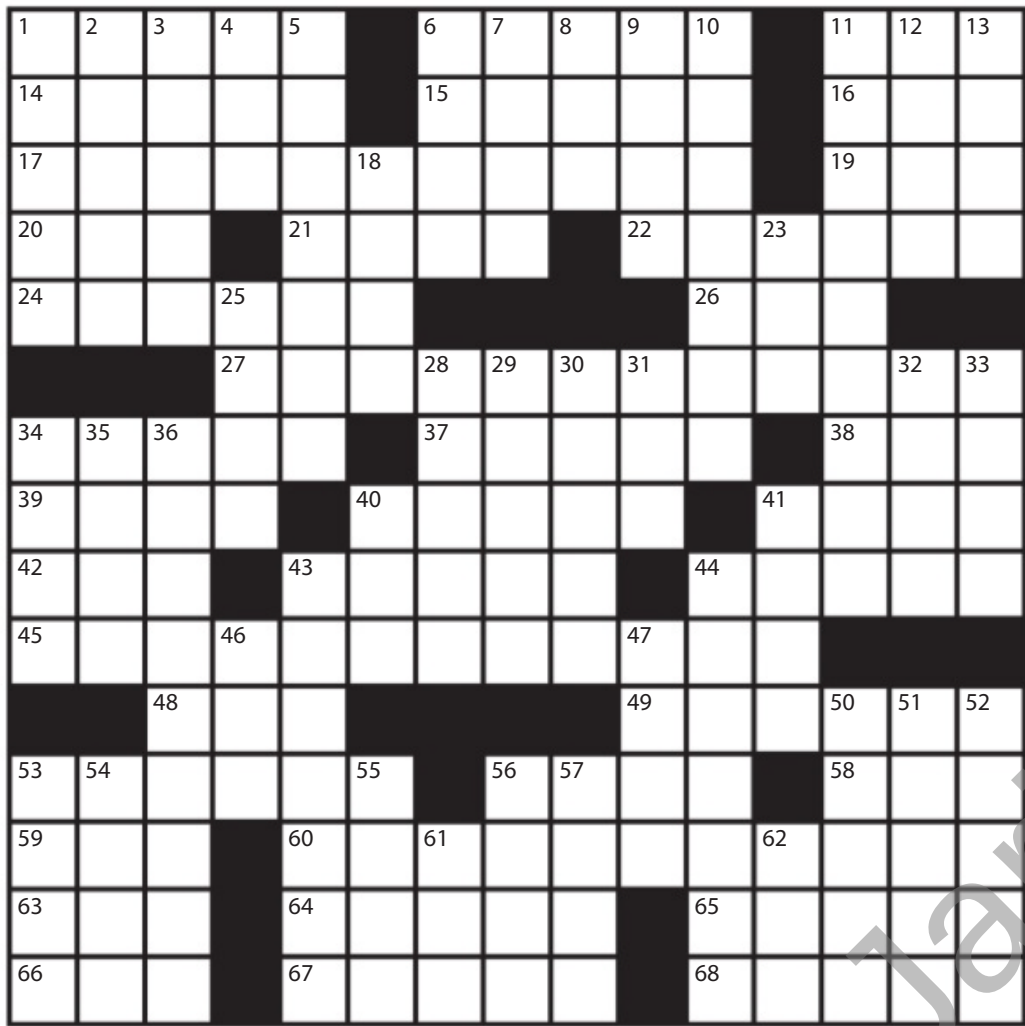
“The aim and final end of all music,” Bach once said, “should be none other than the glory of God and the refreshment of the soul.” Whatever your metaphysical convictions, refreshment of the soul can be the aim of your work, like Bach's.

When I talk about this personal research project I've been pursuing, people usually ask: Whatever happened to the hero on the plane? I think about him a lot. He's still famous, popping up in the news from time to time. Early on, when I saw a story about him, I would feel a flash of something like pity—which I now realize was really only a refracted sense of terror about my own future. *Poor guy* really meant *I'm screwed*.

But as my grasp of the principles laid out in this essay has deepened, my fear has declined proportionately. My feeling toward the man on the plane is now one of gratitude for what he taught me. I hope that he can find the peace and joy he is inadvertently helping me attain.

A version of this article originally appeared in The Atlantic. It has been edited for The Week. Used with permission.

Crossword No. 534: I'm Gonna Bail by Matt Gaffney



ACROSS

- 1 Spells and such
- 6 Big name in Boston
- 11 1949 film noir classic
- 14 One of many in the Maldives
- 15 Think the world of
- 16 Clickable address
- 17 Ex-Nissan CEO who recently jumped bail in Japan, fleeing to Lebanon to escape embezzlement charges
- 19 Cost
- 20 ___ You the One? (MTV show)
- 21 Piece in the paper
- 22 Be more clever than
- 24 Ryder of *Stranger Things*
- 26 Individual
- 27 He pursues a bail-jumping Jennifer Aniston in 2010's *The Bounty Hunter*
- 34 Try to get the job
- 37 Mantle teammate
- 38 Free round
- 39 *Chicago* actor
- 40 *Dances With Wolves* animals
- 41 Not often seen
- 42 Bard's "before"
- 43 Pizzazz
- 44 Stuttgart sage
- 45 True name of reality TV star Dog the Bounty Hunter, who became famous in 2003 for tracking down a U.S. heir who'd jumped bail and fled to Mexico

- 48 Burns with a camera
- 49 Like some plot twists
- 53 A bit
- 56 Defeats easily
- 58 Singer on *Double Fantasy*
- 59 Indignation
- 60 1988 comedy in which Robert De Niro captures bail-jumping Mafia accountant Charles Grodin
- 63 Existed
- 64 CD player button
- 65 Clear
- 66 Stanford-Binet tests measure them
- 67 Trig calculations
- 68 Hitchhiking successes

DOWN

- 1 Colorful bird
- 2 *Missile Command* creator
- 3 Bridge expert Charles
- 4 Feeling bad
- 5 *Ocean* player
- 6 Where a batter practices
- 7 Condition that makes it hard to focus
- 8 Halloween sound
- 9 Approximately
- 10 Flimsy
- 11 Carrier named for a town in Belgium
- 12 Treat in a sleeve
- 13 Rock climber Honnold
- 18 Practice punching
- 23 Detonated material
- 25 Watch creepily
- 28 People with famous peanut butter pie
- 29 Worshipper of Haile Selassie, for short
- 30 Give in to gravity
- 31 Recycler's receptacle
- 32 Literary Jane
- 33 Lively dance
- 34 Elderly
- 35 Andean land
- 36 Annual race held in Maryland, with "the"
- 40 Member of Tampa's NFL team, casually
- 41 City northeast of Sacramento
- 43 Hereditary makeups
- 44 More severe, as a punishment
- 46 ___ Yost (Kansas City Royals manager, 2010-2019)
- 47 Dynasty known for vases
- 50 Org. that tracks Santa Claus
- 51 Already taken, as an email address
- 52 They're orange on roads
- 53 New Zealander
- 54 Site of recent Iranian missile attacks
- 55 Alternative to Evian
- 56 Fairy-tale starter
- 57 Amusing people
- 61 Hibernation location
- 62 Start for sect or cycle

The Week Contest

This week's question: Wealthy executives and other public figures are paying reputation managers to write fake news articles about them that show up high on Google searches, helping to bury real and less flattering news items. In seven words or fewer, please come up with the headline of a fake news article that you would like to appear on Google when your name is typed into the search box.

Last week's contest: Scientists have discovered that plants emit high-pitched sounds too high for humans to hear when they lack water or have their stems cut. If a botanist were to write a book explaining why we all need to be kinder to our leafy friends, what should it be titled?

THE WINNER: "The Secret Strife of Plants"
Mary Tenwinkel, Santa Rosa, Calif.

SECOND PLACE: "Squeal Magnolias"
Steve English, Chapel Hill, N.C.

THIRD PLACE: "A Tree Groans in Brooklyn"
Patty Oberhausen, Fort Wayne, Ind.

For runners-up and complete contest rules, please go to theweek.com/contest.

How to enter: Submissions should be emailed to contest@theweek.com. Please include your name, address, and daytime telephone number for verification; this week, type "Fake news" in the subject line. Entries are due by noon, Eastern Time, Tuesday, Jan. 14. Winners will appear on the Puzzle Page next issue and at theweek.com/puzzles on Friday, Jan. 17. In the case of identical or similar entries, the first one received gets credit.

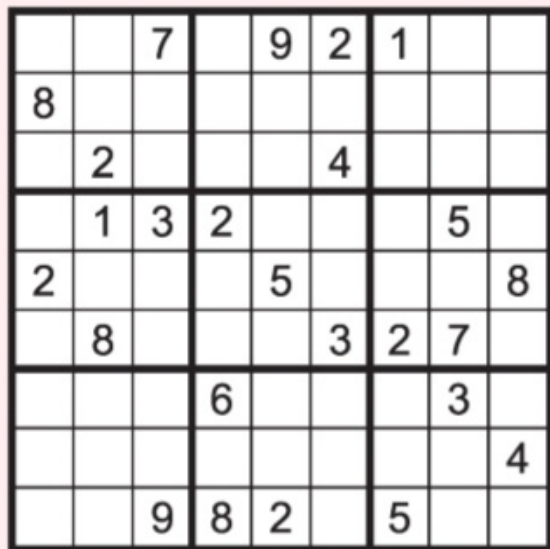


◀ The winner gets a one-year subscription to *The Week*.

Sudoku

Fill in all the boxes so that each row, column, and outlined square includes all the numbers from 1 through 9.

Difficulty:
hard



Find the solutions to all *The Week's* puzzles online: www.theweek.com/puzzle.

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